

**Conversion to Islam in the
Balkans: Kısve Bahası
Petitions and Ottoman
Social Life, 1670-1730**

Anton Minkov

Brill

CONVERSION TO ISLAM IN THE BALKANS

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND ITS HERITAGE

Politics, Society and Economy

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CONVERSION TO ISLAM
IN THE BALKANS

Kisve Bahası *Petitions*
and Ottoman Social Life, 1670-1730

BY

ANTON MINKOV



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To my mother who begged me not to write this book because it was turning her world upside down, to my wife who didn't think I will ever write it and to my daughter Laura whose chubby legs walking around me finally made me write it.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

I use modern Turkish spelling for all Turkish and Ottoman terms, names and book titles, as well as for the transliteration of the Ottoman documents in the Appendix, except for direct quotes. Occasionally, if a name or term of Arabic origin is discussed in a pre-Ottoman context or the modern Turkish spelling differs substantially from its Arabic transliterated form, the latter form is given as well. Geographical names of major cities appear according to their modern version while smaller settlements may appear according to the form used in Ottoman times. Words that have gained acceptance in the English language (such as dervish, vizier, caliph) are rendered according to the spelling found in the Webster's Dictionary.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AO</i>	<i>Archivum Ottomanicum</i>
<i>BOA</i>	<i>Ba bakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>CG</i>	<i>NBKM, Collection Carigrad</i>
<i>EI²</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition</i>
<i>GSU-FIF</i>	<i>Godishnik na Sofijskiya universitet—Filosofsko-istoricheski fakultet</i>
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
<i>INBKM</i>	<i>Izvestiya na Narodnata Biblioteka “Kiril i Metodi”</i>
<i>IÜIFM</i>	<i>İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>NBKM</i>	<i>National Library of Bulgaria SS. Cyril and Methodius</i>
<i>NPTA</i>	<i>NBKM, Collection Novopostapil Turski Arhiv</i>
<i>OA</i>	<i>Osmanlı Araştırmaları</i>
<i>OAK</i>	<i>NBKM, Collection Orientaliska Arhivna Koleksija</i>
<i>OIIPB</i>	<i>Osmanski izvori za islamizatsionnite procesi na balkanite</i>
<i>Prilozi</i>	<i>Prilozi za orientalnu filologiju i istoriju jugoslovenskih naroda pod turskom vladavinom</i>
<i>SI</i>	<i>Studia Islamica</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>NBKM, Collection Sliven</i>
<i>TDIMN</i>	<i>Turski dokumenti za istorijata na makedonskiot narod</i>
<i>TIBI</i>	<i>Turski izvori za Bulgarskata istoria</i>

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The time may be ripe for modifying some of the old approaches to the study of the Middle East. It is not my intention, at the time, to discuss at any length new approaches to the study of modernization of the Middle East. It will suffice to note the growing divergence of opinion among Westerners and native scholars with regard to the origin and trend of developments in the Middle East.

The native writer's views on a given event often conflict with those expressed by outsiders. True, the native, immersed in his own culture and compelled to satisfy the demands of a domestic audience, may not have the freedom and the objectivity of an outside observer. But the question still remains whether the outsider's views on the social, political, and cultural problems of the Middle East are entirely free of his own values and political commitment. Moreover, one may ask whether an outsider can always do a proper justice to an event or trend which his own society did not experience in its historical evolution. A new understanding of Middle Eastern society and its modernization could be achieved by analyzing in the greatest possible detail the internal structural transformation of this society, the emergence of various social groups, their interrelations, and their impact on culture and government. Thus, a factual, empirical approach to the study of the Middle East, free of value judgments or cultural assumptions, should yield satisfactory results. (Kemal Karpat)¹

Although I am certainly not the first student of Islamic history to have been inspired by the above statement made thirty five years ago by Prof. Kemal Karpat,² and although scholarly advances in the interval have softened some of its edge, I still find it quite contemporary and significant, especially in connection with the subject that I propose to investigate here, namely, conversion to Islam. Indeed, there is perhaps no other topic in the field of Ottoman history that

¹ K. Karpat, "The Land Regime, Social Structure, and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire," in W. Polk and R.L. Chambers, ed., *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East; The Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1968), 69.

² See also C.A.O. Van Nieuwenhuijze, *Sociology of the Middle East* (Leiden, 1971), xi.

has produced differences between “native” and “outside” scholars that are more profound. The inspiration for me derives from the fact that I come from a “native” scholarly tradition, while, on the other hand, I have lived and studied long enough outside this tradition to consider myself immersed in the “outside” point of view as well. My objective, therefore, is to combine the “native’s” intuition and experience, shorn of any social and moral prejudices, with the “outsider’s” objectivity and impartiality, yet retaining an intimate familiarity with the particular historical situation. On the other hand, one of the realizations of our postmodern age is that no one can be entirely objective or independent of one’s social and cultural milieu. This means that in my case as well, the “native’s” or the “outsider’s” background may eventually prevail at certain points. I can only try to overcome the shortcomings of both points of view, while drawing on their respective advantages.

Having made this, so to speak, “emotional commitment,” I would like to begin my discussion with the observation that conversion to Islam (or Islamization)³ was a social process of utmost importance to Islamic society throughout its history. Nevertheless, the relation between the expansion and establishment of Dar al-Islam and conversion to Islam is thought to be so axiomatic by scholars of medieval Islamic history that few have actually ventured to investigate conversion as a distinct process. Scholarly works dealing with the topic in pre-Ottoman times are so sporadic⁴ that it would not be an exaggeration to say that the study of conversion in medieval Islamic social history is still in its infancy.⁵

³ The term Islamization in its literal sense has somehow a larger connotation than conversion. It implies more than simply exchanging one set of beliefs with another, but involves a change of life-style, culture and often incidentally social status. It has even been suggested that Islamization in society may occur without religious conversion necessary taking place (see, Tsvetana Georgieva, “Transformaciite na edin sblusak na tsivilizatsii—hristiyanstvoto i islama na balkanite [The Transformation of One Conflict between Civilizations—Christianity and Islam in the Balkans],” in E. Radushev, S. Fetvadjieva ed., *Balkanski identichnosti*, vol. 3, (Sofia, 2003), 75). See also G.R. Hawting, “Umayyads, iv—Arabisation and Islamisation under the Umayyads,” *IE*². However, since religious conversion, *per se*, cannot lead to anything but conversion to an Islamic way of life, it can be also used in the broader sense of Islamization.

⁴ See the literature cited in chapter one.

⁵ For a broad outline of the problems in the study of conversion to Islam and some methodological guidelines see R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton, 1991), 273–283 and N. Levtzion, “Toward a Comparative

At first glance, the state of scholarly achievement in this area of Ottoman studies appears somewhat better. However, several important points need to be made in this respect. First, the attention of scholars in this field has long been focused mainly on the so-called “classical period” of the Ottoman state, i.e., the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Such a tendency is quite understandable. After all, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, because of the strength of the Ottoman central authority, are the period with the most orderly and the well-preserved archives. From those centuries, for instance, we possess cadastral surveys (*tahrir* registers) that allow us to make surprisingly detailed demographic analysis. Certainly, the publication of original sources from the Ottoman archives related to the Islamization process has considerably enriched the factual basis of Ottoman studies. However, it is the historical demographers who have benefited the most from this activity, while social historians have failed to build on the foundation of these studies and demonstrate the social significance of the demographic changes. Yet, conversion to Islam in Ottoman times constituted a social phenomenon that could be and should be studied on its own. It has even been argued that the study of conversion to Islam is actually one of the most effective ways of reconstructing the specific characteristics of each of the constituent societies of medieval Islam.⁶

In the seventeenth century, however, with the changes in taxation practices and land tenure that took place,⁷ the accuracy and number of the *tahrir* registers gradually decreased and so as a result does their corresponding importance as sources. The few scholars who have studied Islamization in this period have therefore tended to rely exclusively on the poll tax (*cizye*) registers, which only reflect the demographic changes in the non-Muslim community. The resulting imbalance between the availability of data and studies devoted to the two periods leaves one with the impression that conversion was more pronounced in the sixteenth than in the seventeenth century.⁸

Study of Islamization,” in idem, ed., *Conversion to Islam* (New York, London, 1979), 1–23.

⁶ Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 276.

⁷ For these changes see H. nalçık, “Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1700,” *AO*, 6 (1980), 283–337, and Evgeni Radushev, *Agrarnite institutsii v osmanskata imperia prez 17–18 vek* [Agrarian Institutions in the Ottoman Empire during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries] (Sofia, 1995).

⁸ See for example, S. Vryonis, “Religious Changes and Patterns in the Balkans,

As demonstrated in this study, however, conversion to Islam in the Balkans achieved its peak only towards the middle of the seventeenth century and continued, in some regions, until the end of the eighteenth. This discrepancy in the study of the two periods is conspicuous in the only book that singles out conversion as an independent topic: *The Spread of Islam in the Western Balkan Lands under Ottoman Rule, 15th–18th Centuries*⁹—where the space devoted to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries amounts to only a couple of pages. Therefore, I believe that a study of the process of conversion during the second half of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries will substantially contribute to our understanding of Ottoman social history during that period.

Another limitation of the studies on conversion in Ottoman times is that they are usually bound to modern national histories, and therefore focus on particular ethnic communities—Albanians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Greeks, etc. On the one hand, such an approach limits the scope of these studies to local conditions, while on the other, the assessment of conversion to Islam seldom goes beyond the expression of nationalistic sentiment. It is, of course, well known that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the struggle for independence waged by the Balkan Christian communities, followed by internal and external political pressures, made ethnic and religious intolerance part of the social climate in the peninsula. As a result, conversion to Islam was usually taken out of its contemporary social context in such studies, while modern realities were projected backwards in time.¹⁰ In the modern context, Islamization could not be regarded in anything other than a negative light by scholars of the new Balkan states. The Ottoman rule in the Balkans was invariably labeled as “the most tragic period” in the history of the Balkan

14th–16th Centuries,” in H. Birnbaum and S. Vryonis, ed., *Aspects of the Balkans* (The Hague, Paris, 1972), 169–170. Vryonis compares the demographic situation of Anatolia and the Balkans at the beginning of the sixteenth century and draws the conclusion that Islamization had succeeded in the former region while Christianity had largely survived in the latter as if they were at the same stage of development of the process of conversion.

⁹ See, A. Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie na islama v zapadno-balkanskite zemi pod osmanska vlast. 15–18 v.* (Sofia, 1990).

¹⁰ This conclusion is not only valid for the study of Islamization but for other aspects of Ottoman history as well. See H. nalcık, and D. Quataert, ed., *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1914* (Cambridge, 1994), 469.

Christian nations and Islamization itself as “assimilation” and “religious discrimination.”¹¹ Studies on conversion have been used or even produced to fulfill particular political goals. To cite Karpát once again, “the manipulation of population statistics for political purposes by various ethnic and religious groups was widespread and ingenious.”¹² One need only point to the massive scholarly effort aimed at proving the Bulgarian origin of the Muslims living in Bulgaria, sparked by the totalitarian regime’s name-changing campaign during the period 1984–89, in which the Bulgarian Turks were singled out. Although neither incorrect nor falsified, this scholarly production was focused specifically on the problem of forced conversion. This very fact renders it, in my view, intellectually tendentious.

In approaching the subject of conversion to Islam, we should bear in mind that the latter is a process “intelligible within specific historical, social and cultural contexts.”¹³ This point is very important, not only for understanding that conversion to Islam in the period under consideration may have features distinguishing it from conversion at other points of time in Islamic history, but also for realizing that we have to analyze it bearing only this particular stage of Ottoman social development in mind. Any other perspective would tend to distort our view of the nature of the conversion and historical reality in consequence.

One of the ways to avoid a distorted perception of conversion to Islam and to determine its proper role in the general development of contemporary Ottoman society is to probe into the social consciousness of the people. It is only by considering the perspective of those who themselves accepted Islam that we can hope to answer this question. Therefore, my method of inquiry will consist in examining also the individual side of the process, the personal reasons for conversion.

That such an approach can be taken is made possible by the existence of a large body of documents that reveal personal information about the converts. The main sources from which this work draws its conclusions are petitions submitted to the sultan of the day by new Muslims requesting that they be rewarded—most often with an

¹¹ See the literature cited in chapters two and three, below.

¹² Kemal Karpát, *Ottoman Population 1830–1914* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1985), 4.

¹³ Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 276.

amount of money known as “*kisve bahası*”—for accepting the new faith. It would not be an exaggeration to state that these documents, which I refer to as “*kisve bahası* petitions,” are unique, since, with the exception perhaps of court records, no other body of official documents provides such an insight into the lives of ordinary people. A significant number of documents of this kind have so far been discovered in the Ottoman archive of the National Library of Bulgaria, while recently some have surfaced in Turkish Ottoman archives as well.

It was in the 1980s that Bulgarian scholars first began analyzing *kisve bahası* petitions as sources for the history of Islamization in the Balkans.¹⁴ The largest published collection of these documents contains about 150 translations of petitions in Bulgarian and 83 facsimiles.¹⁵ In two publications by A. Velkov and E. Radushev, a number of *kisve bahası* petitions are presented in English.¹⁶ However, in all these sources the petitions are discussed only within the framework of an assumption of indirect coercion,¹⁷ a mindset that dominated the approach of most Balkan scholars to the subject, at least, until recently. The new Muslims who submitted the petitions are described as “men and women fallen into desperate and critical situations, searching through conversion to Islam for salvation from starvation and poverty, from debts and creditors.”¹⁸ No Bulgarian study has actually utilized *kisve bahası* petitions for analytical purposes, nor have the latter been properly studied. Although it was acknowledged that the petitions “allow for a better study of the motives and mechanisms of the Islamization process,”¹⁹ no one, it seems, ventured after that to explore their potential. The most likely reason for past reticence on the part of Bulgarian scholars towards approach-

¹⁴ See A. Velkov, “Novi dannii za pomohamedanchvane v Jugoiztochna Trakiya [New Information about Conversion to Islam in Southeast Thrace],” *Vekove*, 3 (1986), 73–75.

¹⁵ M. Kalitsin, A. Velkov, E. Radushev, ed., *Osmanski izvori za islamizacionnite procesi na balkanite XVI–XIX v.* [Ottoman Sources for the Islamization Processes in the Balkans, 16th–19th centuries] (Sofia, 1990).

¹⁶ A. Velkov and E. Radushev, “Documents from the Ottoman State Archive on the Balkan Islamization Processes 14th–19th centuries,” in G. Yankov, ed., *Aspects of the Development of the Bulgarian Nation* (Sofia, 1989), 60–76; idem, *Archives Speak*, vol. 7 (Sofia, 1989).

¹⁷ See for example, S. Dimitrov, “Avant-propos,” in *OIIPB*, 23–42; Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 183–186; Velkov, and Radushev, *Archives Speak*, 12.

¹⁸ S. Dimitrov, “Avant-propos,” 39.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

ing these sources was because the petitions speak of voluntary conversion and thus do not conform to the politically-correct theory of forced conversion. It should be pointed out also that the work *Osmanski Izvori za Islamizaciionnite Protsesti*—the book which made *kisve bahası* petitions, so to speak, public—appeared in 1990, when the subject of conversion to Islam had already become a “taboo” subject in Bulgarian scholarly circles, precisely because of its former political connotation.²⁰ In other words, *kisve bahası* petitions were admitted as a historical source *per se*, but their contents somehow not.

These documents are known to Turkish scholars as well. Two *kisve bahası* petitions, although without proper reference to the archival source, were published by Uzunçar ılı as early as 1948.²¹ Most recently, *kisve bahası* petitions from Turkish archives have been mentioned in a study by Fatma Göçek.²² The reason for such reluctance on the part of Turkish scholars to explore these sources may be also connected to political correctness.

In spite of the fact that it was the Dutch scholar M. Kiel who has made the most significant discovery so far of such documents in Turkish archives—33 in total, western scholars too have found it difficult to investigate *kisve bahası* petitions because of the secrecy or political sensitivity surrounding them.²³ Thus, for a variety of

²⁰ This situation has begun to change in the last couple of years. There is a growing interest again in the subject of conversion as a part of a movement trying to break away from the former ideological approach to the study of history. See for example, E. Radushev, “Demografski i etnoreligiozni procesi v zapadnite Rodopi prez 15–18v [Demographic and Ethno-religious Processes in the Western Rhodopes, 15th–18th Centuries],” *Istorichesko badeshte*, 1 (1998), 46–89. See also the answer to his study from S. Dimitrov, a representative of the scholars who continue to maintain the traditional approach, “Shte imame li nauchni pozitсии po problemite na islamizatsiyata i sadbinita na bulgarskite mohamedani? [Shall We Ever Have a Scientific Position on the Problems of Islamization and the Fate of Bulgarian Muslims?],” *Rhodopica*, 1 (1999), 131–147. More recent examples of the new approach are A. Zelyazkova, “Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the Southeast-European Perspective,” in Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, ed., *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden, 2002), 223–266, and E. Radushev, “Smisalat na istoriografskite mitove za islamizaciyata [The Meaning of the Historiographical Myths of Islamization],” in E. Radushev, S. Fetvadjieva, ed., *Balkanski identichnosti*, vol 3 (Sofia, 2003), 152–197.

²¹ See, .H. Uzunçar ılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Te kilatı* (Ankara, 1948), Appendix, Facsimile 27 and 28.

²² Fatma Müce Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire. Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York, Oxford, 1996), 36.

²³ See for example, D. Hupchick, “Seventeenth-Century Bulgarian Pomaks: Forced

reasons, *kisve bahası* petitions have generated amazingly little interest among scholars as sources for the history of conversion and for social history in general.

During my research in the Ottoman archive of the Department of Oriental Collections at the National Library of Bulgaria “SS. Cyril and Methodius,”²⁴ I was able to discover 601 *kisve bahası* petitions, contained within 299 archival units.²⁵ Prof. M. Kiel has moreover provided me with information on the 33 documents that he discovered in the Ottoman Archive of the Prime Minister (Ba bakanlık Ar ıvi) in Istanbul.²⁶ The bulk of the documents can be dated to a period extending from the early 1670s until the 1730s.

or Voluntary Converts to Islam?” in S.B. Vardy and A.H. Vardy, ed., *Society in Change: Studies in Honor of Bela K. Kiraly* (New York, 1983), 305–14. According to Hupchick, Bulgarian scholars admitted in private conversations their awareness of the existence of *kisve bahası* petitions long before their first publication. However, publicly their existence was denied.

²⁴ I surveyed all documents classified as related to Muslim religion in the collections 1, 1A and CG (in these collections are included all documents related to the Ottoman central offices in Istanbul), and the entirety of the collections NPTA and OAK, as well as some collections related to the province—approximately 20,000 documents altogether.

²⁵ See Appendix 2, List of archival units in The National Library of Bulgaria containing *kisve bahası* petitions, for a complete list of the archival units.

²⁶ See Appendix 3, List of archival units in *Ba bakanlık* Ottoman archive, Istanbul, containing *kisve bahası* petitions.

CHAPTER ONE

CONVERSION TO ISLAM BEFORE THE OTTOMANS: THEORIES OF CONVERSION

The Age of Conversions

As pointed out at the beginning of this study, the literature on conversion in early and medieval Islamic times is rather limited in comparison to the works produced on other topics of Islamic history. This situation is a reflection of the availability of historical sources for the study of conversion. There is, in fact, very little information about conversion in the otherwise abundant medieval Arabic religious literature and chronicles. According to Bulliet, this is because the phenomenon itself was normally an individual, non-political, choice or experience, without profound religious meaning.¹ It is not a surprise then that conversion did not capture the attention of the medieval Islamic chroniclers and religious scholars. Nevertheless, scholars have been able to identify certain general trends in the process of conversion and establish a timeframe.

The first fundamental point is that conversion to Islam was not an instant process immediately following military conquest. Although all conquered people “surrendered,”² not all converted to Islam. It is acknowledged by most scholars that conversion resulting from military conquest was usually limited to a small number of individual cases. Only in the instance of the Arab and Berber nomadic communities did political allegiance result in conversion *en masse*.³ For most of the conquered communities the process was a gradual one, following the military conquest and extending over centuries. The

¹ R. Bulliet, “Conversion Stories in Early Islam,” in Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, ed., *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto, 1990), 125.

² When relating to the events of the early Islamic conquests the compilers of chronicles did not distinguish between the two meanings of the verb *aslama*—“to surrender” and “to accept Islam” (Bulliet, “Stories,” 124).

³ N. Levtzion, “Comparative Study,” 6.

magnitude of conversion, however, increased with time, eventually achieving a snowball effect. Scholars refer to the period in which the highest number of conversions occurred as “the age of conversions.”

There is a divergence in scholarly opinions, however, over what centuries we should designate as the “age of conversions.” An earlier generation of scholars, on the evidence of taxation figures from Iraq and Egypt, believed that the majority of non-Muslim non-Arabs in these regions converted to Islam within a century of the conquest in order to escape paying the poll tax.⁴ The same conclusion was reached with respect to the Berbers in North Africa and the indigent population of Spain, despite the lack of direct evidence.

Conversion and Taxation

Critical re-examination of the sources and the innovative use of some others, previously thought of as unrelated to conversion, has led to revision of the above conclusions and a substantial postponement of the “age of conversions”—well into the Abbasid period. Dennett’s study—*Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*⁵—was fundamentally important to this revision, since it showed the inconsistency of the belief that the desire to escape the poll tax was the primary reason for early conversion. Since Dennett’s conclusion is relevant also to the discussion of conversion to Islam in the Balkans, it is necessary that it be elaborated upon here in some detail.

The most important reasons cited by scholars in support of the argument for early mass conversion are the following. First, at the time of the conquest, the Arabs exacted from the subject peoples a tribute, consisting of a fixed amount of money and agricultural produce. Second, although the tribute was raised by a tax on land and a tax on income, i.e., the poll tax, the Arabs were not concerned with the methods or the justice of the assessors. Therefore, the terms *khar j* (Ott. *haraç*) and *jizya*, (Ott. *cizye*), taken to mean land tax and poll tax, were for more than a century synonymous and signified merely “tribute.” The Arabs did not even themselves distinguish

⁴ See, for example, T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (London, 1913), 9–10, 81–82, 103, 210.

⁵ D.C. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge, 1950).

between land and poll tax. It was not until A.H. 121 (739) that the governor of Khurasan, Na r b. Saiy r, decreed that from that point onwards all people, Muslims and non-Muslims, had to pay land tax, whereas the poll tax was designated as a humiliating fee to be paid only by non-Muslims. Third and last, a convert to Islam was free of any obligation to pay tribute, not merely poll tax, while the land in his possession became effectively tax-exempt. These strong economic motives, according to this argument, resulted in widespread conversion.⁶

The problem, according to Dennett, is that most of the Muslim jurists and historians contradicted the above points. He believed that these contradictions should not be dismissed, in the way other scholars have done, as deliberate falsification explained by the desire to attribute the origin of contemporary economic institutions to the period of the conquest.⁷ Instead, Dennett advanced the idea that the discourse on taxation in early Islam should be seen in the framework of unique settlements made by the Arabs with each of the conquered territories. If this is done, most of the difficulties presented by the contradictory evidence disappear. The other pillar of Dennett's critique was that *khar j* and *jizya*, as synonymous terms, meant not tribute but simply tax. Moreover, these two terms originally had the specific meanings of land tax and poll tax, respectively, meanings that they retained at a later period as well.⁸

Based on these premises, Dennett surveyed the post-conquest taxation practices in each of the major central Islamic territories, namely Sawad, Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and Khurasan. In each of these regions, he showed how the different progression of conquest resulted in different taxation settlements. In Sawad, there prevailed *khar j* land, i.e., land taken by force.⁹ The owner of this land was the Muslim state, while the usufruct remained in the hands of the former owners.¹⁰ The transfer of ownership of *khar j* land from the state to an individual, either through sale to a Muslim, or through the conversion of the possessor, was illegal unless the caliph permitted

⁶ Dennett, *Conversion*, 3–4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸ Dennett, *Conversion*, 12–13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

such a transfer.¹¹ In other regions—such as Mesopotamia and Syria—although technically *khar j* land, the newly conquered local communities were able to negotiate treaties.¹² Those that had surrendered voluntarily negotiated a treaty known as an *ahd*, which imposed a fixed amount of tax; those that had surrendered after armed confrontation were forced to sign a treaty called *ul*. The difference between *ul* and *khar j* lands proper was that the former retained their own native administration while the latter were regulated by the Arabs.¹³ The domain lands and the former autopract estates, e.g., the possessions of the Sassanids in the East, were appropriated as *khar j* land, and some of them were later given away as fiefs.¹⁴ In Egypt, the taxation scheme showed even greater variety. There, Coptic communities had a separate tax treatment. In addition, there was also *khar j* land (such as Alexandria), which had been taken by force, and *ahd* territory (such as Pentapolis), which had surrendered peacefully and paid a fixed, annual sum, to be neither increased nor decreased.¹⁵ Khurasan as a whole surrendered peacefully to the Arabs and received the status of *ahd* land. Each city in Khurasan negotiated a treaty for a fixed amount of money.¹⁶

With regard to actual tax gathering, the old methods of assessment and collection were abandoned in favor of more simplified ones, but there was no change in the kinds of taxes imposed, i.e., land, poll and extraordinary, which had existed long before the conquest. Non-Muslims continued to pay a poll tax graded in amount to reflect their income. The change was that Umar imposed the poll tax on all classes of society.¹⁷ The landowners and state officials, though formerly exempted, were compelled to pay it. Since the poll tax was regarded by the Persians and Byzantines alike as a mark of inferiority, it continued to indicate a degraded status under the Arabs. As a result, some of the nobility converted to Islam in order to keep their social position.¹⁸ Thus, on conversion, a man was exempted

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹² *Ibid.*, 47 and 51.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26, 60 and 73.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 60–61.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32–33, 61.

from his poll tax, alone. A convert still had to pay his land tax while he stayed on his land, although if he emigrated he was released from this burden as well.¹⁹ In treaty towns, taxes were assessed by the agents of the inhabitants, not by those of the Arabs. If there was widespread conversion within a treaty town, the caliph had the power to reduce the amount of the tribute.²⁰

Though he refuted the thesis that non-Muslims invariably paid tribute and were therefore no longer obligated to do so upon conversion, Dennett did not deny that the poll tax alone may have been a sufficient economic reason for conversion.²¹ Nevertheless, he observed that, except in Khurasan, there was little evidence of the latter occurring. This phenomenon he attributed to the solidarity of the non-Muslim religious community, the opposition of the Arab government to large-scale conversion and the reluctance of the latter to exempt converts from the poll tax.²²

What made Khurasan such a special case? The fact that the migration of Arabs to the region was on a larger scale and that, due to a lack of organized opposition to Islam, conversion was more common. What prevented mass conversion was the fact that local notables actually used the degrading poll tax as a weapon against Islamization. The privileged group that had reached settlements with the conquerors was left in charge of the registers, so they paid to the Arabs what was stipulated and kept the rest for themselves. Having the power to collect the taxes, they not only refused to exempt converts from the poll tax but also shifted the fiscal burden onto the latter by exempting non-Muslims from its payment.²³ Thus, the decree of Nār b. Saiy r distinguishing between *khar j* and *jizya* could be regarded as an attempt to reform the tax system in Khurasan and as applying to the unique set of conditions existing in this province only.

In other words, Dennett demonstrated convincingly that the poll tax alone could not have and in fact did not play such an important role in conversion to Islam after the conquest. There were other factors, mostly social, that exercised a bigger influence on this phenomenon—e.g., the risk of losing social status, or the local organization and traditions of individual non-Muslim communities.

¹⁹ Ibid., 41–42.

²⁰ Ibid., 42.

²¹ Ibid., 86.

²² Ibid., 87–88.

²³ Ibid., 116–128.

Bulliet's Theory of Social Conversion

Dennett's conclusion that conversion to Islam was of limited extent in the first century following the conquest was substantiated by Brett²⁴ and Lapidus²⁵ for North Africa and Egypt. The first chronologically comprehensive and conceptually sound view of conversion to Islam, however, was that offered by Bulliet. His *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*²⁶ is of great importance to the study of Islamization. Although highly speculative, it has been described as "innovative, provocative and intriguing,"²⁷ and merits careful consideration. Bulliet's study is important not because of the quantitative data employed but because it looks at the process of conversion from a much broader perspective, namely, that of social relations. For Bulliet, conversion as the profession of another faith is not as significant as "social conversion," i.e., "conversion involving movement from one religiously defined social community to another."²⁸ In his discussion of the social consequences of conversion to Islam, Bulliet is guided by two "axioms" of religious conversion: 1) "The convert's expectations of his new religion will parallel his expectations of his old religion,"²⁹ i.e., people who are more or less satisfied with their previous religious life and who convert for worldly, rather than spiritual reasons, will find life in the new religious community more appealing the more it resembles their life in the previous community;³⁰ and 2) "Leaving aside ecsta-

²⁴ M. Brett, "The Spread of Islam in Egypt and North Africa," in idem, ed., *Northern Africa: Islam and Modernization* (London, 1973), 1-12.

²⁵ I. Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 2 (1972), 248-62.

²⁶ R.W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, 1979).

²⁷ M. Morony, "The Age of Conversions: A Reassessment," in Gervers and Bikhazi, *Conversion and Continuity*, 138.

²⁸ On the one hand, Bulliet points out that formal conversion to Islam consisted primarily of the pronunciation of eight words—the *shah da*—and that there was no priestly involvement whatsoever. On the other hand, he points that, due to important social changes from imperial Roman times, in the immediately pre-Islamic period social identity was predominantly religiously defined and thus, "the notion of social conversion is both significant and quite specific" (Bulliet, *Conversion*, 33-34). By defining social conversion in terms of individual behavior, Bulliet also conveniently bypasses the problem of nomads' conversion and excludes from his study Arabia and Morocco.

²⁹ Bulliet, *Conversion*, 35.

³⁰ One of the consequences of this axiom is that conversion gives rise to pressure affecting the course of development of the new religion (Bulliet, *Conversion*, 36).

tic converts, no one willingly converts from one religion to another if by virtue of conversion he markedly lowers his social status."³¹

No less interesting are Bulliet's sources and methodology. The data for his study is derived from biographical dictionaries. His starting point is the hypothetical link between chronologically varied regional representation among 6113 biographies, covering the period to year A.H. 1000 (1592) and the percentage of Muslims in the population of a given area. The fact of one region's becoming more prominent at a given time, according to the author, would be related ultimately to a more rapid rate of conversion in that region.³²

To justify this conclusion, Bulliet looks first at genealogies recorded in biographical dictionaries related to Iran. When a genealogy is initiated by a Persian name, Bulliet assumes the latter to be the name of the first family member that converted to Islam. Based on 469 such genealogies, Bulliet constructs an S-shaped curve, depicting the percentage of conversions from the entire sample divided into twenty five-year periods, until the middle of the eleventh century, on a cumulative basis.³³ Borrowing terminology and ideas from sociology, namely, the study of innovation diffusion,³⁴ Bulliet interprets the graph as being comprised of five segments. The first 2.5 percent of the population to convert are deemed "innovators," the next 13.5 percent "early adopters," the next 34 percent "early majority," the next 34 percent "late majority" and the final 16 percent "laggards."³⁵ Then Bulliet compares the S-curve to the political events from the first four centuries of Muslim rule in Iran and observes that:

1. Beginning in the year 750, when the Abbasids come to power and with the conversion process only 10 percent completed, non-Muslim revolts break out. The revolts die out when the middle point of the conversion process is reached.³⁶

³¹ Bulliet, *Conversion*, 41.

³² *Ibid.*, 7–15.

³³ Bulliet, *Conversion*, 23.

³⁴ Bulliet's reasoning behind this analogy is that the superiority of one religion over another, if it cannot be demonstrated in the same way as two technical products, for instance, can still be induced by various means such as persecution, direct or indirect financial rewards, etc. Both religious conversion and innovation diffusion are also similar because of the importance of the access to information as a prerequisite for their dissemination—Bulliet, *Conversion*, 31.

³⁵ Bulliet, *Conversion*, 51.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 44–46.

2. Semi-independent Muslim dynasties (Tahirids) appear around 822—the middle point of conversion—and become increasingly independent with the progression of the conversion (Samanids, Buyids).³⁷
3. A factional struggle occurs in the last period of conversion—that of the “laggards”—between the descendants of “innovators” and “early adopters,” who tended to be of lower class origin, and the “early and late majority” converts and their descendants, who came from traditionally more prominent families. This struggle is manifested in the fields of law, theology and personal piety (Hanafi vs. Shafi i law, Mu tazili vs. Ashari theology, asceticism vs. mysticism). The latter group’s more populist view of Islam eventually prevailed over the conservative elitist view of the former group.³⁸

Bulliet realizes, however, that the same kind of analysis cannot be applied to the other Islamic regions, since, with the exception of Spain, personal names are traditionally Semitic. To overcome this obstacle Bulliet sets another criterion for the progress of conversion. Again, using Iran as a testing ground, he compares the curve of popularity of the five most distinctive Muslim names—Muhammad, Ahmad, Ali, al-Hasan and al-Husain—to the S-curve of conversion.³⁹ He observes that in stage one—“innovators”—pre-Islamic Arabic names are given to all sons of converts. In stage two—“early adopters”—the popularity of these names declines and the popularity of the five Muslim names gains ground. In stage three—“early and late majority”—the popularity of the latter names rises dramatically. In stage four—“laggards”—the curve continues to rise among sons of converts, but declines sharply in overall use. Therefore, Bulliet concludes, the peak use of the five Muslim names signifies the end of “late majority” and the beginning of the “laggards” period.

Despite the scanty data available to him, Bulliet is able to construct S-curves of conversion for Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia and Spain by taking the peak date of the Muslim name curve as an indication of the “late majority” period’s end and correlating political

³⁷ Ibid., 46–49.

³⁸ Bulliet, *Conversion*, 54–62.

³⁹ Ibid., 66–67.

events and cultural history to conversion according to the pattern established for Iran.⁴⁰ In Iraq, the “innovators” period roughly coincided with that in Iran, i.e., the last quarter of the seventh century. The “early adopters” period, however, lasted thirty years longer than in Iran, ending in 791. From that point onwards, the conversion process increased in pace but less explosively than in Iran. The “late majority” period was only achieved in Iraq by 975, i.e., almost two centuries later. In Iran, the same process was accomplished in just over one century—between 762 and 875.⁴¹ In Egypt, Tunisia and Syria, the conversion was at its halfway point by the very end of the ninth century and it was primarily completed (“late majority”) by 976, i.e., at about the same time as in Iraq.⁴² In Spain, conversion followed the same timetable as in Iraq, Syria and Egypt, but ran about a century late, i.e., 50 percent had converted by 961 and 84 percent by 1105.⁴³ In other words, the heavily Christian areas of Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Spain converted at approximately the same rate, taking into account the later date of conquest of Tunisia and Spain. On the other hand, the conversion of Zoroastrian Iran significantly outpaced the conversion rate in the other regions. Moreover, despite the more complicated political and religious history of Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Spain, Bulliet is still able to demonstrate how the process of conversion to Islam led almost inevitably to: 1) anti-Muslim or anti-government uprisings from the point when Muslims constituted a significant minority until the process of conversion was halfway accomplished; 2) the weakening or dissolution of central government and the formation of independent Muslim dynasties once conversion passed the halfway point; and 3) conflicts of interest between population groups converted at different periods once the conversion process approached its end.

It should be pointed out that Bulliet does not assign more importance to a single factor or group of factors as a primary condition for conversion. In his view, it is “access to information” that is the

⁴⁰ There are two peaks in the Muslim name curve for these regions. Bulliet attributes the first to the earlier popularity of these names among descendants of Muslim Arabs who migrated there. The higher the first peak is, the higher the migration of Arabs is (Bulliet, *Conversion*, 72–78).

⁴¹ Bulliet, *Conversion*, 81–82.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 92–109.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 124.

prerequisite for conversion.⁴⁴ The more people convert to Islam, the more social interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims intensifies. At the same time, the probability and rate of conversion also intensify.

Bulliet's theory of conversion is, on the surface at least, persuasive. It should be remembered, however, that it can and it has been heavily criticized on many grounds. There is, for instance, the methodological objection that, in order for the theory to hold, the many assumptions and hypotheses supporting it must all be valid.⁴⁵ Second, it has been pointed out that Bulliet's data is relevant to an urban, well-educated male elite only, and may not be representative of the rest of the population.⁴⁶ Third, information from literary sources, despite its sporadic and impressionistic character, does not always seem to coincide with the smoothness of Bulliet's curve, which suggests that the process of conversion might have had significant sub-regional specifics.⁴⁷

Despite these criticisms, no one has ever tried to invalidate Bulliet on the same scale. After all, as Bulliet admits, his theory is purely heuristic, i.e., "one that is valuable for empirical research but unproven or incapable of proof."⁴⁸ I would, nevertheless, contend that, given the considerable amount of empirical data available for conversion to Islam in the Balkans, it would be useful to revisit his findings and test their viability in the latter context.

The Stages of Conversion in Asia Minor

If we accept Bulliet's conclusions, for most of the Islamic lands the process of conversion was essentially completed by the middle of the eleventh century. Nevertheless, Bulliet leaves a margin of twenty percent of the population unconverted even at this point.⁴⁹ In other words, in lands conquered during the first century of Islam, there was still room for conversions several centuries later.⁵⁰ Furthermore,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁵ Humphreys, *History*, 282.

⁴⁶ Morony, "The Age of Conversions," 138.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 141–144.

⁴⁸ Bulliet, *Conversion*, 128.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁰ See for example Donald P. Little, "Coptic Conversion to Islam under the

there were also areas that came under Muslim rule in the eleventh and subsequent centuries, areas in which the process of conversion only started at this time. It is possible that the Islamization of these regions manifests certain specific features especially with the conversion process and building of Islamic social institutions having been completed elsewhere. In my review, I shall focus only on the conversion to Islam in Asia Minor because of its long-time historical ties with the Balkans and thus, the similar economic, social and cultural settings of the two regions.

There is a striking similarity in the fact that the Islamization of Asia Minor and that of the central Islamic lands were each completed in about four centuries. The time frame of the process in the former region is firmly established in the sources. We know that the Islamization of Anatolia began with the first influx of Turkic nomadic tribes after the battle of Manzikert in 1071 and that it was largely completed by the beginning of the sixteenth century, when, according to Ottoman tax records, the population of Anatolia included less than 8 percent non-Muslims.⁵¹ With this observation, however, the initial similarity is exhausted. In contrast to the swift and surprisingly peaceful Arab conquests (albeit punctuated by a few key battles) in the first Islamic century, Asia Minor had to be conquered piece by piece over the course of four centuries. Often, conversion to Islam in Asia Minor was not the result of post-conquest social development but a contemporaneous process or one following immediately upon the conquest. In his *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*,⁵² Speros Vryonis presents Islamization as the result

Bahrî Mamluks, 693–755/1293–1354,” *BSOAS*, 39 (1976), 552–69; idem, “Coptic Converts to Islam During the Bahrî Mamluk Period,” in Gervers, Bikhazi, *Conversion and Continuity*, 263–88. Non-Muslim communities flourish even today in many of the regions discussed above—see N. Levtzion, “Conversion to Islam in Syria and Palestine and the Survival of Christian Communities,” in Gervers, Bikhazi, *Conversion and Continuity*, 288–312.

⁵¹ The figure for the period 1520–1535, according to Ö.L. Barkan, is 903,997 tax-paying Muslim households and 78,428 non-Muslim, i.e., 92 and 8 percent respectively. See Ö.L. Barkan, “Essai sur les données statistiques des registres de recensement dans l’Empire ottoman au XV^e et XVI^e siècle,” *JESHO* 1 (1958), 20, Table 1. The figures are only approximate, however, because they do not include non-Muslims freed from taxes in return for semi-military services.

⁵² Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971).

of four centuries of warfare, destruction, pillage and depopulation.⁵³ It is worth noting, for instance, that, for the period in question, the population actually declined from about 8,000,000⁵⁴ to an estimated 5,000,000⁵⁵ at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Moreover, if we take into account the fact that the latter figure includes a significant influx of nomadic Turkic tribes⁵⁶ and immigrants from other Islamic lands, the toll on the native non-Muslim population appears to have been even greater.⁵⁷ It can, therefore, be concluded that conversion of the native population of Asia Minor to Islam played only a small part in the overall process of Islamization of the region and cannot be regarded as the sole reason for the formation of Anatolian Islamic society, unlike the case in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and North Africa, where it was a major factor. Here I am not actually concerned with the causes of Muslim advancement in Anatolia. What is relevant to this study, rather, is how and why the process of conversion to Islam took place among the remaining non-Muslims in Asia Minor.

First, it should be pointed out that historical sources are still lack-

⁵³ Claude Cahen, however, points to evidence of a great degree of toleration and cooperation between the two religious communities after the first tide of invasion—see Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey* (London, 1968), 202–215. See also his critical review of Vryonis' book in *IJMES* 4 (1973), 112–126. Cemal Kafadar also depicts a high level of coexistence from the narrow point of view of the *gazi's* popular culture—see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1995).

⁵⁴ Vryonis, *Decline*, 26.

⁵⁵ Barkan, "Essai," 24. This figure is based on the assumption that a taxable household consisted of five persons. It has been pointed out, however, that the Ottoman "*hane*" is more likely to vary between 3–4 persons. See for discussion nalçık and Quataert, *History*, 28. Therefore, a recalculation based on 3–4 persons per "*hane*" would put the taxable population of Anatolia at less than four million people. Nevertheless, when we add the non-taxable portion of the population, the actual number should not be much different from what Barkan proposed.

⁵⁶ The nomadization of the peninsula was one of the major reasons for this depopulation as the sedentary population moved out from the areas with extensive influx of nomads. See V.L. Ménage, "Islamization of Anatolia," in Levtzion, *Conversion*, 58. For a similar observation with regard to Syria and Palestine see Levtzion, "Survival," 291–301.

⁵⁷ It is doubtful that anybody will be able to estimate the number of Turkic nomads who migrated to Anatolia in the course of these four centuries. Yinanç (cited by Vryonis, *Decline*, 179:n269) puts the initial body of Muslim settlers at 1,000,000. According to Vryonis, this figure is improbable. His conclusion is that the Turks were a "small but powerful minority" for the first century after Manzikert (Vryonis, *Decline*, 179–181). Osman Turan's opinion is that 70 percent of the later population of Asia Minor are descendants of ethnic Turks—Osman Turan, "L'islamisation dans la Turquie du Moyen Age," *SI*, 10 (1959), 137–152.

ing when it comes to information on the conversion process in Asia Minor. The only reliable figures are from the beginning of the sixteenth century, i.e., from Ottoman times, when the process of conversion was already completed. To understand what actually happened from the last quarter of the eleventh century to the sixteenth, we have to rely mostly on Muslim and Christian chronicles, which, as pointed out above, provide only an impressionistic picture of the process. Despite the limitations of such sources, Vryonis is nevertheless able to distinguish two basic geographical areas that should be observed with regard to Islamization: 1) the central Anatolian plateau, and 2) the surrounding regions. He also divides the history of the Islamization of Anatolia into four periods: 1) eleventh to late twelfth centuries; 2) thirteenth century; 3) late thirteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries; and 4) mid-fifteenth to sixteenth centuries.⁵⁸

The first period saw Muslim colonization of the central plateau and displacement of the indigenous Christian population.⁵⁹ Conversion, although a factor, seems not to have been as extensive as in later times.⁶⁰

In the second period, the thirteenth century, political stability and economic prosperity returned to the peninsula. The economic and cultural florescence of the Sultanate of Rum during this period ensured the victory of Islam over Christianity in the Anatolian plateau.⁶¹ The activities of Islamic mystical orders also became manifest in this period. Despite the probably exaggerated numbers, there must be some truth to the claims found in the Muslim hagiographical literature of the period that there were extensive conversions at the time.⁶²

From the late thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries political instability once again took over. The whole region experienced a resurgence of nomadic colonization and the emergence of numerous tribal polities actively pursuing expansion of Dar-al-Islam. By the early fifteenth century, only a few coastal areas remained in Byzantine

⁵⁸ S. Vryonis, "The Experience of Christians under Seljuk and Ottoman Domination, Eleventh to Sixteenth Century," in Gervers, Bikhazi, *Conversion and Continuity*, 185–216.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁶⁰ Vryonis, *Decline*, 176–179. Vryonis admits that the evidence for this period is "far from complete." His sources are poetic compilations such as the *Danishmendname*, composed in the thirteenth century, and isolated references in contemporary sources.

⁶¹ Vryonis, "Christians," 197.

⁶² Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 215.

hands. Conversion seems to have been intensive throughout the period.⁶³

In the last half of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans succeeded in politically consolidating Anatolia. There was, at the same time, retardation in the pace of conversion. This can clearly be observed in the case of the region of Trebizond (Trabzon), which came under Muslim rule in 1461. It was annexed by Mehmed II in a swift and decisive campaign without major disruptions of economic and social life. Presumably completely Christian before the conquest, half a century later the area still had only 1094 Muslim households compared to 12,632 Christian households.

What the sources cannot disclose, however, may be revealed by Bulliet's theory of conversion. One cannot help noticing that the periods described above have a lot in common with Bulliet's timetable of conversion. The late eleventh and twelfth centuries could be identified with the periods of "innovators" and "early adopters," the thirteenth century with the "early majority" period, the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with the "late majority" period and the fifteenth century with the "laggards" period. The sequence of political events, attributed by Bulliet to each of these periods, seems also to confirm the validity of such an assumption. The anti-Muslim revolts, which Bulliet places in the "early adopters" period up until the end of the "early majority" period, can, in the case of Asia Minor, be easily identified with the Byzantine military campaigns from the time of Emperor Alexius Comnenus (1081) until the withdrawal of Byzantine forces from Anatolia in 1261.⁶⁴ After the middle of the thirteenth century, Byzantium abandoned the policy of actively trying to drive Muslim forces from the peninsula because it was no longer able to sustain this effort. It can be concluded that the process of Islamization reached its halfway point in the second half of the thirteenth century. If we accept that the late thirteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries was the "late majority" period, with the Muslims no longer feeling their rule threatened, we should expect a breakdown of central authority and the establishment of independent Muslim dynasties. Indeed, as pointed out above, this latter

⁶³ According to Vryonis (*Decline*, 182–183 and 446), at the beginning of the thirteenth century non-Muslims were still the majority in the peninsula.

⁶⁴ For this period see Vryonis, *Decline*, 114–137.

period was precisely one of political fragmentation. Therefore, following Bulliet's conversion curve, the mid-fifteenth century should be the point when Islamization was about 85 percent complete in Asia Minor. The Islamization of the remaining 15 percent—"the laggards"—was to go on until 1520.

The institutional development of Islamic society in Asia Minor also seems to confirm, in retrospect, Bulliet's conversion theory. According to the latter, towards the end of the "late majority" period a factional struggle may be expected to occur between descendants of converts from the first two periods of the conversion process and descendants of converts from the "early and late majority" periods. In my opinion, in the case of Asia Minor, this factional struggle occurred between the *gazi-dervish* milieu and the centralist conservative-minded milieu of the young Ottoman state in the first half of the fifteenth century.⁶⁵ The former were descendants of those who upheld the *gaza* tradition of the twelfth century, i.e., in the period of the "early adopters," whereas the latter emerged from the ranks of those converted in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As in the case of the central Islamic lands, the latter group pushed forward a different kind of "orthodoxy"—Sunni-Hanafi—against the *gazis'* heterodox-Alevi vision of Islam. In contrast to what happened in the case of ninth-century Islamic society, where the populist forces won the battle, in Anatolia, or rather, in the Ottoman polity, the conservative-elitist movement prevailed.⁶⁶

Despite the seeming applicability of Bulliet's theory of conversion to Asia Minor, given the present state of research it is virtually

⁶⁵ For the struggle between the *gazi-dervish* milieu and the Ottoman central establishment see Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 138–150. It might be worthwhile for future researchers of the origins of the Ottoman state to investigate the connection between the Islamization of the native population of both Asia Minor and the Balkans, and the transformation of the Ottoman state from a *gaza* principality to an empire. Although underlining the importance of the *gazi*-centralists conflict in the formation of Ottoman state, Kafadar does not perceive it as connected to Islamization.

⁶⁶ The victory of the conservative-elitist movement is symbolically represented by the refusal of Mehmed II to stand up at the sound of *gazi* martial music—a custom observed by all previous Ottoman sultans (Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 146). It has to be admitted that, since by the beginning of the fifteenth century most of the Balkans were also part of the Ottoman state, factional strife could also have been influenced by the effects of the gathering momentum of conversion in the Balkans. It would be incorrect then to assert that the conclusion of the conflict was only a result of developments in the Anatolian Islamic community.

impossible to create a conversion curve for the latter. First, the sources do not provide a quantitative perspective of conversion versus colonization. Second, the peninsula was not conquered at once and therefore, conversion most probably had different timetables in each sub-region. On the other hand, even if it were possible to create a conversion curve for Asia Minor, this would not be sufficient to describe the process in all its diversity. What I mean is that Bulliet's model completely disregards the different reasons that are usually given to explain widespread conversion in favor of the sole factor of "access to information," i.e., the more numerous the Muslim population becomes, the more likely it is for the remaining non-Muslims to come into contact with the former and to convert to Islam. However, as Morony observes,⁶⁷ we may never know what might have happened without those other circumstances that encouraged conversion, such as the internal weakness of the non-Muslim communities, social restrictions, Muslim hostility, excessive taxation, physical insecurity, etc. Because some of the circumstances that played a role in the conversion to Islam in Asia Minor later became manifested also in the Balkans, I will briefly discuss these in the following pages.

The Nature of Muslim Conquest and Conversion in Asia Minor

One of the circumstances that played a role in the conversion process in Asia Minor was the longevity and violent nature of the Muslim-Christian encounter, in which neither side refrained from inflicting cruelty on the other, depending on which side had the upper hand. In the resulting atmosphere of animosity, forced mass conversions, apostasy and subsequent reprisals were not uncommon.⁶⁸ We can hardly speak of "social conversion" in such cases. In other words, as long as the conquest continued and, at the same time, there persisted in the conquered lands a degree of institutionalization and stabilization of social life,⁶⁹ voluntary and forced conversions to Islam

⁶⁷ Morony, "The Age of Conversions," 139.

⁶⁸ See for an example Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 66–67 and Vryonis, *Decline*, 177.

⁶⁹ If we exclude the period of stability in Muslim Anatolian society in the first half of the thirteenth century under the Seljuks of Rum, final stabilization was only achieved under the Ottomans at the end of the fifteenth century.

progressed hand in hand. Again, however, given the present state of research, we are not able to assess their share in the overall process.

Islamic Institutions as Factors of Conversion

What were the circumstances that contributed to voluntary conversion? In my opinion, the factor that played the most significant role in the process was the stage of maturity of Islamic society and its institutions prior to the conquest of Asia Minor. In the central Islamic lands, the process of conversion went hand in hand with the development of social institutions. By the time of Anatolia's conquest, the most important Islamic social and economic institutions were already in place.

To Vryonis, the most important of these institutions was the Islamic state, which, according to him, supported Islam in every way and merely tolerated Christianity as the religion of its second-class citizens.⁷⁰ He admits, however, that this is a situation typical for any medieval state formation, Muslim and Christian alike.⁷¹ From his account it also becomes clear that it is not the Islamic state *per se* that he has in mind but some of the institutions, typical of an Islamic state:

The sultans and officials built mosques, medresses, imarets, zawiyas, hospitals, caravansarays, and fountains for the Islamic associations and endowed them with lands, serfs, and revenues. Consequently, the ulemas and dervishes had the economic wherewithal to perform their spiritual functions with elegance and their socioeconomic tasks with great efficiency.⁷²

It is evident from the above passage that Vryonis identifies the Islamic state with the private activities of its political and intellectual elite. I would argue, however, that it was, first of all, the existence of educational and charitable institutions such as mosques, *medresses*, *imarets*, *zawiyas*, hospitals, and caravansarays in Muslim society, and second, the tradition of building such establishments, that made the private activities of the wealthy and the pious possible. If we look for the

⁷⁰ Vryonis, "Conversion," 351.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 351–352.

place and role of the Islamic state in the conversion process, it should be sought not in that of being a direct participant but in that of being a guarantor for the existence of such educational and charitable establishments.⁷³ The real catalysts in the conversion process were economic institutions such as the *waqf*, social institutions such as the mystical orders (*tariqa*), and social classes such as the *ulema* and dervishes that ran these and other establishments.

In the economic sphere, the *waqf* institution played the greatest role in the process of Islamizing Anatolian society. The *waqf* served the purpose of channeling wealth to the institutions that provided the social network of Islamic society.⁷⁴ The stronger this network was, the greater the probability of integrating non-Muslims into it,⁷⁵ for at the same time wealth was being channeled away from the Christian religious and charitable establishments, thereby undermining the economic foundations of the Orthodox Church. Consequently, the Christian congregations were left for the most part leaderless and open to cultural transformation and integration into Islamic society.⁷⁶

The other Islamic institutions particularly relevant to conversion in Asia Minor were the mystical orders and the *futuwwa* organizations in urban centers. The mystical orders contributed to the creation of religious syncretism in Anatolia on a popular level. They tended to equate Islamic practices and saints with those of the Christians or vice versa, thus, making the transfer from one religious community to the other seems less radical. Although there were several orders exerting influence on Anatolian society, the *Mevlevi* and *Bektashi* orders were of the greatest importance. The first operated primarily in urban environments while the second was more active in rural areas.

⁷³ The Islamic educational and charitable institutions did not develop out of a desire to convert non-Muslims to Islam or the state's policy of pursuing religious homogeneity but rather in response to the needs of Muslims and the proper functioning of Islamic society itself. The Islamic educational and charitable establishments facilitated conversion to Islam only as a consequence of operating in a mixed religious environment and being a manifestation of a vital society. To me, the very existence of Islamic state is also a consequence of the proper functioning the other Islamic social and economic institutions and not vice versa.

⁷⁴ See Vryonis, *Decline*, 352–355, for numerous examples of endowments to Muslim religious, educational and charitable establishments and their financial support.

⁷⁵ Most of the charitable establishments were not limited to Muslims only but provided for non-Muslims as well—see Vryonis, *Decline*, 352.

⁷⁶ See Vryonis, *Decline*, 288–350.

Although strongly influenced by the dervishes, who also observed *futuwwa* principles, the *akhi* brotherhoods had a distinct organizational structure and operated primarily in urban centers. They integrated urban trade association from all religious groups. Thus, the brotherhoods absorbed the non-Muslim population of Anatolia into the Islamic world by penetrating the economic organizations of the towns.⁷⁷

Summary

1. Conversion to Islam on a large scale did not immediately follow the Muslim conquests in the first Islamic century; rather, the conversion was a gradual process, occurring over a span of four centuries.
2. Although different circumstances such as taxation, oppression, etc., had an impact on the process, it was primarily a social process, operating in a fashion similar to the mechanism of innovation diffusion in human society.
3. The process of conversion in the territories conquered in the first Islamic century was completed by the middle of the eleventh century. It followed a very similar pattern in all territories, which may be plotted on a logistic S-shaped curve reflecting five distinct periods in the intensification of conversion.
4. From the second half of the twelfth century, conversion to Islam began in the new territories, i.e., ones that had previously lain outside the Muslim realm. Although the conversion in one of these territories—Asia Minor—followed the logistic curve, it also reflected the different stage of maturity of Islamic society elsewhere (existence of economic and social institutions directly affecting conversion) and some specifics of the conquest (longevity, extensive colonization of nomadic tribes, etc.).

⁷⁷ Vryonis, *Decline*, 401.

CHAPTER TWO

PERIODS OF CONVERSION TO ISLAM IN THE BALKANS AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

Our review of conversion to Islam in pre-Ottoman times suggests that an understanding of the duration and nature of the conquest of non-Muslim territories by Muslim forces is important for any study of the subsequent process of conversion. Thus, in the following pages I present a brief historical outline of the conquest of the Balkans by the Ottomans and some of the controversies connected with it.

The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans and Conversion to Islam

The conquest of the Balkans was accomplished in the space of little more than a century and in two stages—1352 to 1402 and 1415 to 1467. The main reason for the relatively faster pace of the conquest of this region, compared to that of Asia Minor, was the political fragmentation of the Balkans on the eve of the Ottoman invasion. In the middle of the fourteenth century, the Balkans consisted of a number of small kingdoms and independent rulers. The Byzantine state held only some territories in Thrace, Thessaly and Macedonia. Catalan mercenaries also operated independently in Thrace, while the Morea was in Venetian hands. The Bulgarian state had by then disintegrated into the three kingdoms of Tarnovo, Vidin and Kalliakra. Albania was divided among four autonomous rulers. The Serb, Croatian and Bosnian kingdoms in the western Balkans were also torn apart by dynastic struggles. Another important factor was that the petty rulers in Macedonia, Thessaly, Epirus, Albania and parts of Bulgaria were essentially foreigners (mainly of Serbian origin). With no political power strong enough to dominate the Balkans, local rulers tried to secure their precarious reigns by alliances with one or another of their stronger neighbors. The Ottomans in fact emerged as a political player in the Balkans because of just such an alliance with a pretender to the Byzantine throne. Taking advantage of the favorable political situation, Muslim forces were able

quickly to overrun the petty rulers or to secure peacefully their acceptance of Ottoman suzerainty.

The first stage of the conquest started with the capture of the cities of Çimpe (Tzympe) in 1352 and Gelibolu (Gallipoli) in 1354. By 1402, the eastern part of the peninsula—Thrace (1366), Macedonia (1371), Bulgaria (1394), Thessaly (1399) and parts of Serbia and Epirus—were part of the Ottoman state. In the second stage of the conquest, the rest of the Balkan peninsula was subjugated—Constantinople (1453), Serbia (1459), southern and central Bosnia (1463), the Morea (1464), Herzegovina (1465) and Albania (1467). Some peripheral areas, however, did not come under Ottoman rule until later—a small part of Herzegovina (1483), the coastal area of Albania (1497), Montenegro (1499), Belgrade (1521), northern Bosnia (1520–1528), and Croatia (1527). A small part of Montenegro, the city-state of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and the Adriatic coast of Dalmatia were the only Balkan areas to retain independence after the middle of the sixteenth century.

Although scholars in general agree on the reasons and the time frame of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, there is still considerable debate about the nature of this conquest. Essentially, there are two diametrically opposite opinions. The first one, rooted in the precepts of Balkan nationalism and recent politics, stresses the violence and destruction wreaked by the Ottoman conquest and regards it as having had a tragic impact on the Balkan peoples. This view is appropriately referred to by M. Kiel as the “catastrophe theory.”¹ It was until recently the leading trend among Balkan national historians, save Turkish scholars. An exemplar of the “catastrophe theory” and at the same time one of its pillars is the Bulgarian historian H. Gandev, who produced an influential study of the demographic situation of the Bulgarian people in the fifteenth century.² Utilizing the *timar* registers known to him from that century, Gandev estimates that 2608 Bulgarian villages disappeared in the course of the century. On the basis of an average size of 43 households per village and an estimate of five people per household, Gandev calculates that

¹ See M. Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria in the Turkish Period* (Assen, Maastricht, 1985), 33.

² H. Gandev, *Bulgarskata narodnost prez 15v.* [The Bulgarian People in the Fifteenth Century] (Sofia, 1972).

the Bulgarian rural population decreased by a total of 112,144 households (or approximately 560,000 people) as a result of the Ottoman conquest. An additional 24,000 urban households (or 120,000 people) are estimated by him as having been killed, enslaved, deported, forced to migrate or given no choice but to convert to Islam, so that the total population decline of the Bulgarian people in the fifteenth century amounts to the figure 680,000.³ According to the author, the latter figure, constituting 39 percent of the pre-Ottoman Bulgarian population, warrants the thesis of a “demographic catastrophe” and a “biological collapse of the nation.”⁴ Yet, although Gandev’s conclusion seems to be founded on solid empirical evidence, his methodology has been severely criticized by some scholars. We have already alluded to the rather unscientific nature of Gandev’s multiplying factor of five persons per taxable household vis-à-vis the more probable figure of three or three and a half person per taxable household. Objections that are even more serious have been raised as to his methodology in arriving at the figure of 2608 vanished villages. He, for instance, had assumed that the term *mezraa*, found in the registers, always denotes a deserted or destroyed village. S. Dimitrov, however, has pointed out that a reference to *mezraas*⁵ in tax registers is most often an indication of an initial stage in the formation of a new village as a result of population increase and expansion of agriculture,⁶ i.e., an indication of a process that is the opposite of that envisioned by Gandev. Furthermore, with regard to his conclusion that the Christian population in cities disappeared as a result of systematic destruction and depopulation,⁷ N. Todorov has shown that, even at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a substantial proportion of the town dwellers was made up of Christians, while among the Muslim inhabitants converts to Islam were in the majority.⁸ As for cases of destruction of towns, the Ottomans were not to

³ Gandev, *Narodnost*, 20–56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵ According to H. nalçık, *mezraa* denotes: 1) a field under cultivation; 2) a large farm with no permanent settlement; it may be originally a deserted village or land reclaimed by a nearby village. See nalçık and Quataert, *History*, “Glossary,” s.v. *mezraa*.

⁶ S. Dimitrov, “Mezrite i demografskiya colaps na balgarskiya narod [The *Mezraas* and the Demographic Collapse of the Bulgarian Nation],” *Vekove*, 6 (1973), 54–65.

⁷ Gandev, *Narodnost*, 91–92.

⁸ N. Todorov, *Balkanskiyat grad XV–XIX v. Socialno-ikonomitesko i demografsko razvitiie*

blame most of the time. According to the only source giving details about the capture of many Bulgarian towns and based on eyewitness accounts—such as the Chronicle of Mevlâna Ne rî—only two, out of a total of thirty, Bulgarian castles and towns resisted and because of this were destroyed. It was not in fact until half a century after the Ottoman conquest that most of the Bulgarian towns were razed to the ground, and this, ironically, by the Christian army of the Crusade of 1443/44.⁹

Finally and most importantly, Gandev's critics point out that his conclusion about a "demographic collapse" in this region is unwarranted since there is no source from pre-Ottoman times that could give us information on how many people lived in Bulgaria or any other Balkan state. It has been observed that the sizes of medieval Bulgarian towns, made known to us today through archeological excavation, do not point to the existence of a large population.¹⁰ Nevertheless, despite the severe criticism, Gandev's conclusions were accepted as correct in general by a number of leading Bulgarian and other Balkan scholars.¹¹

The other trend of opinion about the nature of the Ottoman conquest holds that the Balkan peoples for the most part benefited from the Ottoman conquest. According to this view, the conquest brought peace and stability to the region, liberated the population from feudal anarchy and excessive taxation and encouraged economic prosperity. I call this view the "blessing theory." Elements of the "blessing theory" appeared first in the works of the Czech scholar K. Jire ek. He stressed the miserable conditions of anarchy and exhaustion engendered by the never-ending civil wars and feudal strife of the 14th century.¹² After him the Rumanian historian Nicolas Iorga pointed out that Balkan peasants were by and large satisfied with Ottoman administration, which had brought about unity and was

(Sofia, 1972), translated by P. Sugar as *The Balkan City: Socio-economic and Demographic Development, 1400–1900* (Seattle, 1983).

⁹ See, for discussion on this matter, Kiel, *Art and Society*, 45–47 and the references given there.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹¹ See, for example, E. Grozdanova, *Bulgarskata narodnost prez 17v. Demografsko izsledvane* [The Bulgarian People in the 17th century: A Demographic Survey] (Sofia, 1989), 25.

¹² K. Jire ek, *Geschichte der Bulgaren* (Prague, 1876), 284–96; *idem*, *Geschichte der Serben* (Gotha, 1911), 379–81.

not at all interested in its subjects' religious or ethnic backgrounds.¹³ The "blessing theory" was also popular amongst Turkish scholars of the generation before World War II.¹⁴ Yet, despite evidence cited by proponents of the "catastrophe theory" in support of their position that the Ottoman conquest was far from "liberation" for the Balkan peasant, the "blessing theory" continued to thrive in scholarly circles.¹⁵

One can also discern a third group, made up of scholars who gravitate closer to the "blessing theory" in terms of their assessment of the nature of the Ottoman conquest, but who may be distinguished due to their more careful weighing of the facts. These scholars point to the demographic and economic development in the first century of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, a phenomenon that is irreconcilable with the situation depicted by proponents of the "catastrophe theory." On the other hand, they acknowledge the evidence of some degree of destruction, violence, hardship and religious inequality brought about by the conquest. I would call this view the "modern approach," since it is advanced mostly by contemporary scholars, who rely on modern methods of analysis along with an extensive use of archival sources, not just chronicles. The "modern approach" is best represented in the works of H. nalçık.¹⁶ He contends that the Ottoman conquest was a gradual process, which was not driven by "lust for booty" or by the will of the sultan. As nalçık explains it, the conquest of a region would normally begin with a series of raids, which would eventually force the local ruler to accept Ottoman suzerainty and agree to pay a tribute. Then, when the opportunity presented itself, the Ottomans would eliminate the local ruling dynasties, annex the territory and transform it in a *sancağ* (district).¹⁷ During

¹³ N. Iorga, *Histoire des états balkaniques* (Paris, 1925), 25.

¹⁴ See, for example, .H. Uzunçar ılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* (Ankara, 1947), who views the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans as "liberation from the cruelty of their own lords and the return to order and justice."

¹⁵ See, for example, Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philipp II* (London, New York, 1973), 663—"The [Ottoman] conquest, which meant the end of the great landowners, absolute rulers on their own estates, was in its way a Liberation of the oppressed."

¹⁶ See also L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1958) and A. Stojanovski, "The Character and the Influence of the Ottoman Rule in Yugoslav Countries in the 15th and 16th Centuries, with Special Reference to Macedonia," in *Ottoman Rule in Middle Europe and Balkan in the 16th and 17th Centuries: Papers Presented at the 9th Joint Conference of the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav Historical Committee* (Prague, 1978).

¹⁷ See H. nalçık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *SI*, 2 (1954), 103-129.

the process of conquest, the Ottomans sought to preserve the economic integrity of an area as much as was possible. Local taxation practices and production modes were maintained almost unchanged.¹⁸ However, as part of the process of exchanging local arrangements for a centralized system of administration—the *timar* system—the Ottomans replaced the labor services due to the feudal lords with their cash equivalent.¹⁹ If labor services, such as guarding mountain passes, participating in military campaigns, or sheep breeding for the needs of the palace, etc., were still required by the state, peasants were exempted partially or even entirely from paying taxes. Thus, in light of the “modern approach,” we can speak of the Ottomans “liberating” Balkan peasants from their lords and “lightening” their taxation burden only in the sense that, in being freed from unproductive labor, peasants had more time to invest in their farms.²⁰ They were able then to turn the increased production into profit and thus more easily meet their tax obligations. With regard to *cizye*, which is usually considered to be the mark of a non-Muslim’s inferiority and a sign of his degraded status, nalçık also points that the income tax that existed in the Balkans prior to the Ottomans²¹ served as the basis for the *cizye*’s imposition. After the conquest, the *cizye* was initially levied at the pre-conquest levels of the local tax—usually one gold piece—despite the provisions in Islamic law allowing authorities to set the rate at 2 and 4 gold pieces for the middle class and the wealthy, respectively. Thus, it is very unlikely that Balkan Christians, with the exception of certain of the nobility, would have regarded the *cizye* as an extraordinary burden or a sign of inferiority immediately after the conquest.²² The small disturbances in the

¹⁸ That taxation variations existed in the different *sancaks* is well documented in the Ottoman *kanunnames*, written at the beginning of the tax registers for each *sancak* or town. For published *sancak kanunnames* from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries see in Ö.L. Barkan, *XV. ve XVI. Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ziraî Ekonominin Hukukî ve Malî Esasları, I: Kanunlar* (Istanbul, 1943). A new edition of *kanunnames* is still underway in Ahmed Akgündüz, ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri* (Istanbul, 1990).

¹⁹ See nalçık and Quataert, *History*, 70–71 and 149–151.

²⁰ H. nalçık, “Village, Peasant and Empire,” in idem, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington, 1992), 143.

²¹ nalçık and Quataert, *History*, 68. See also Nédim Filipovi, “A Contribution to the Problem of Islamization in the Balkans under the Ottoman Rule,” in *Ottoman Rule in Middle Europe*, 341.

²² nalçık and Quataert, *History*, 68.

Balkan Orthodox Church's function and structure, due to the latter's cooperation with and eventual integration into the Ottoman state structure, is a fact which may also have contributed to the relatively mild impact of the conquest on the Balkan population.

To conclude, I accept as more historically accurate the view that there was no major disruption of Balkan economic and social life as a result of the conquest. Moreover, the Ottoman system of administration provided room for the continuity of local traditions and life patterns; thus, it can be said that the Balkan native population in general suffered little alienation or discrimination at the hands of their new masters. In other words, conversion to Islam in the Balkans in the subsequent centuries was primarily a "social conversion," and could be expected to follow the pattern established by Bulliet for the central Islamic lands.

In trying to prove such a hypothesis, the student of conversion to Islam in the Balkans finds his task facilitated by the relatively high degree of survival of sources, which give a more accurate statistical perspective on the conversion process. In fact, the difference in nature between the sources for the history of conversion to Islam in the Balkans and the sources for the same process in other regions prior to this time is so significant that I will focus my attention briefly on this disparity.

Population Statistics as Sources of Conversion in the Balkans

By the time the whole of the Balkans became an integral part of the Ottoman state, the latter had developed into a highly bureaucratic empire regulating at every possible level the lives of its subjects. Particular attention was paid in these circumstances to taxation. Extensive general tax surveys were conducted with the ultimate goal of enlisting every source of revenue and every taxable head, including nomads, gypsies and displaced people (*haymane*), a fact unprecedented in previous Islamic states. Hundreds of district tax registers from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries and some general tax registers, mostly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, have survived to modern times. However, these tax registers have certain limitations as sources, which should be also considered. First, they use as the fiscal unit the household (*hane*) rather than the individual. Second, different taxes corresponded to *hanes* of different size, which

further complicates any attempt to connect the *hane* with the actual population. Third, villages were switched between districts in consecutive registers, thus giving a false impression of changes to the population in particular districts. Fourth, general registers do not include the tax-exempt population, for in addition to the members of the *askerî* class, a significant number of *reaya* enjoyed tax-exempt status as well.²³ Moreover, according to the needs of the state, the status of tax-exempted *reaya* could be revoked or granted at any time, and therefore, figures in the registers change. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the fact that Bulliet reached his conclusions on the basis of a few hundred records of conversion, it is evident that there is a qualitative as well as quantitative difference between the sources available for these two periods. Scholars of Balkan history have realized the potential of tax registers for studying the ethno-religious and demographic changes that occurred in the Balkans during the Ottoman period, and the volume of such studies has increased tremendously in the last few decades. It could even be said that the examination of the problems surrounding the demographic development of the area has become an independent branch of Ottoman historical studies, that is, historical demography.

The first steps in the historical demography of the Balkan lands under Ottoman rule were taken with the publication of Ottoman registers from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by Turkish scholars in the 1940s and 1950s. By examining registers from the sixteenth century, Ö. Barkan was able to determine, for the first time, the number of households in the Empire and to demonstrate the reliability of the data.²⁴ H. nalcık,²⁵ M.T. Gökbilgin²⁶ and

²³ There were separate registers, however, for the tax-exempt (*muaf*) *reaya*. The numbers of the *askerî* class can also be roughly estimated from the military staff registers (*yoklama defteri*) and by the *timar*-holders described in the registers. Barkan assumes that the exempted population totaled 6 percent of the total population.

²⁴ Ö.L. Barkan, "Essai," (this is actually the French version of his "Tarihi Demografi Ara tirmaları ve Osmanlı Tarihi," *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, 7-8 (1954), 1-26, idem, "Osmanlı mparatorlu unda bir kân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler," *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 2 (1942) and idem, "Osmanlı mparatorlu unda bir I kân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu olarak Sürgünler," *IÜİEM* (1949-1954).

²⁵ H. nalcık, *Hicri 835 Tarihli Süreti Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid* (Ankara, 1954) and idem, "Od Stefana Du ana do Osmanskog Crastva: Hri anske Spahije u Rumeliji u XV vijeku i Njihovo Porijeklo," *Prilozi*, 3-4 (1952-53), 23-53. A Turkish version of the article is "Stefan Du an'dan Osmanlı mparatorlu una," in *Fuat Köprülü Arma anı* (Istanbul, 1953), 207-48.

²⁶ M.T. Gökbilgin, *Rumili'de Yürükler, Tatarlar ve Evlad-i Fatihan* (Istanbul, 1957).

J. Halaço lu²⁷ also contributed to our knowledge of the demographic situation in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. K. Karpat published a study of the population of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire based on the first Ottoman population census.²⁸ The interest in the demographic development of the Balkans during the early period of Ottoman rule inspired also the publication of collections of original sources in Macedonia, Greece, Bosnia, Serbia, Albania and Bulgaria.²⁹ In Greece, tax registers were published by E. Balta.³⁰ For Albania, the works of S. Pulaha have shed light on local demographic problems.³¹ Very helpful as well for the respective regions are the works of the Macedonian scholars A. Stojanovski,³² M. Sokolovski³³ and A. Matkovski,³⁴ the Bosnians B. Djurdjev,³⁵ N. abanovi³⁶ and A. Hand i,³⁷ and the Serbs O. Zirojevi³⁸ and D. Luka.³⁹ In

²⁷ J. Halaço lu, "XVI yüzyılda Sosyal, Ekonomik ve Demografik bakımdan Balkanlarda bazı Osmanlı ehırleri," *Bellelen* 53 (1988).

²⁸ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population*.

²⁹ *Turski izvori za Bugarskata istoria* [Turkish Sources of Bulgarian History] Vol. 1-7, (Sofia, 1964-86); *Turski dokumenti za istorijata na makedonskiot narod* [Turkish Documents for the History of the Macedonian People] Vol. 1-5, (Skopje, 1971-85).

³⁰ E. Balta, *L'Eubée à la fin du XV^e siècle. Economie et population—les registres de l'année 1474* (Athens, 1989).

³¹ S. Pulaha. *Aspects de démographie historique des contrées albanaises pendant les XV^e-XVI^e siècles* (Tirana, 1984); idem, *Le cadastre de l'an 1485 du sandjak de Shkoder* (Tirana, 1974).

³² A. Stojanovski, *Gradovite na Makedonija od krajot na XIV do XVII vek. Demografski prouchevanja* [The Macedonian Towns from the end of 14th to the 17th century. A Demographic Study] (Skopje, 1981) and A. Stojanovski, M. Sokolovski, ed., *Opshiren popisen defter 4 (1467-1468)* [Cadastral Register 4 (1467-1468)] (Skopje, 1971).

³³ M. Sokolovski, "Opshirni popisni defteri ot XVI vek za Kustendilskiot sandjak" [Cadastral Registers from the Sixteenth Century for the Sancak of Kjustendil], in *TDIMN*, 5 (Skopje, 1983).

³⁴ A. Matkovski, "Migratsii ot selo vo grad vo Makedonija od XVI do XIX vek [Migrations from Villages to Cities in Macedonia from the sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries]," *Yugoslavenski Istorijski Casopis*, 1-2 (1974).

³⁵ B. Djurdjev, "Defteri za Tsrnogorski sandjak iz vremena Skender bega Tsrnoevitcha" [Registers of the Sancak of Montenegro during the time of Skenderbeg Tsrnoevitch], *Prilozi*, 1-3 (1950-53).

³⁶ N. abanovi, *Krai te Isa-Bega Ishakovi a. Zbimi katastarski popis iz 1455 godine* [The Land of Isa Beg Ishak. One Cadastral Register from 1455] (Sarajevo, 1964).

³⁷ A. Hand i, "O islamiziju u severoistocnoj Bosni u XV i XVI vijeku [About the Islamization in Northeast Bosnia during the 15th and 16th Centuries]," *Prilozi*, 16-17, (1966-67) 5-48.

³⁸ O. Zirojevi, "Vucitrinski i Prizrenski sandjak u svetlosti turskog popisa 1530/1531 godine [The Vuchitrin and Prizren Sancaks in the Light of the Turkish Register of 1530-31]," *Gjurmine albanologjike*, 2 (1968).

³⁹ D. Luka, *Vidin i vidinskija sandjak prez 15-16v. Dokumenti ot arhivite na Tsarigrad and Ankara* [Vidin and the Sancak of Vidin during the 15th and 16th Centuries. Documents from the Archives of Istanbul and Ankara] (Sofia, 1975).

Bulgaria, the pioneer of historical demography is N. Todorov,⁴⁰ while his compatriots Elena Grozdanova,⁴¹ S. Dimitrov,⁴² A. Zelyazkova⁴³ and R. Kovatchev⁴⁴ have also published works on demographic changes and the process of Islamization in the Balkans. Based on this vast literature, we are able to understand the overall demographic processes in the Balkans much better than we can other regions under Muslim rule in pre-Ottoman times.

The Demographic Situation in the Balkans in the Fifteenth Century

Although the earliest surviving tax registers are from the first half of the fifteenth century,⁴⁵ the earliest extant registers that cover the peninsula as a whole are from the end of the century. Table 1 below, based on data extracted from these registers,⁴⁶ presents the numbers of non-Muslim households paying *cizye* and the converts to Islam among them for the years 1488 to 1491, arranged by *sancak*.

⁴⁰ N. Todorov, *The Balkan City*; and N. Todorov and A. Velkov, *Situation démographique de la Péninsule balkanique (fin du XV^e s.–début du XVI^e s.)* (Sofia, 1988).

⁴¹ Grozdanova, *Narodnost*.

⁴² S. Dimitrov, “Demografski otnoshenia i pronikvane na islama v zapadnite Rodopi i dolinata na Mesta prez XV–XVII vek [Demographic Relations and Spread of Islam in Western Rhodopes and the Valley of Mesta in the 15th–17th Centuries],” *Rodopski Sbornik*, 1 (1965), 63–114; idem, “Ėtnicheski i religiozni protsesi sred balgarskata narodnost prez XV–XVII vek [Ethnic and Religious Processes among the Bulgarian Nation in the 15th–17th Centuries],” *Balgarska Ėtmografija* 1 (1980), 23–41; and idem, “Pronikvane na mohamedanstvoto sred balgarite v Zapadnite Rodopi prez XVII vek [The Spread of Mohamedanism among the Bulgarians in the Western Rhodopes in the 17th Century],” *Rodopi* 6–7 (1972), 12–14; 15–17.

⁴³ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*.

⁴⁴ R. Kovatchev, *Opis na Nikopolskiya Sancak ot 80-te godini na XV vek* [Survey of the Nikopol Sancak from the 1480s] (Sofia, 1997).

⁴⁵ See nalçık, *Hicri*.

⁴⁶ Todorov and Velkov, *Situation démographique*, and Ö. Barkan, “894 (1488/1489) Yılı Cizyesinin Tahsilatına ait Muhasebe Bilançoları,” *Belgeler* 1 (1964), 1–117. The interrelation of data between the two studies is very complicated. Barkan relies on an older study by Todorov (N. Todorov, “Za demografskoto sastoyanie na Balkanskiya poluostrov prez XV–XVI vek,” *GSU-FIF*, 52, 2 (1959), 193–225) to cover the years 1490–91, noting the numerous typographical and calculation errors of Todorov. In *Situation démographique*, Todorov corrects these and other errors based on a new reading of the register by A. Velkov, thus making Barkan’s essay outdated. Nevertheless, Todorov generates again a large number of errors making his own data unreliable. There is no space here to list all errors, but for example, the register (appended to the study in Arabic script and translation) has on page 3 recto “new Muslims-3, *voynuks-2*,” for the region of Yanbolu. Yet, in his Table 1, Todorov puts down

Table 1. *Cizye*-paying non-Muslim population and new Muslims for the years 1488–91 by *sancak*⁴⁷

<i>Sancak</i>	1488	1488 new Muslims	1489	1489 new Muslims	1490	1490 new Muslims	1491
Pasha	131,239		131,050		131,182	13	136,304
Smederevo	17,577 (8,738)		175,77		1,842		18,253 (9,203)
Gelibolu	836		836		836		878
Vize	127		127		126		125

“new Muslims-5.” On page 30 recto, the register has a “total of 8,814 *hanes*” for the region of Smederevo, which Todorov transcribes as “total of 8,011.” On page 38 recto, the register has “6,585 *hanes*” for the region of Grevena, whereas Todorov lists 6,885 in Table 2, etc. More striking are the mistakes in Table 2, where the data is broken down by *sancaks* and the number of *hanes* is a total of regular *hanes* and widows’ *hanes*. First, the region of Smederevo and 10 smaller areas, which are present in Todorov’s Table 1, are missing from his Table 2, giving a difference of 24,105 *hanes* for 1490 and 25,168 *hanes* for 1491. Second, from the 23 *sancak* totals, Todorov has calculated wrongly 5 totals for the year 1490 and 2 for 1491, giving a difference of 340 *hanes* for 1490 and 40 *hanes* for 1491. I have tried to correct as many errors as I have been able to discover in both studies (the only error of Barkan is for the *hass* of Siroz (Serres)—481 *hanes* instead of 841, but it might have been actually a scribal error) for the figures in my table. Moreover, both scholars include in their grand totals the *hanes* from the island of Midilli (Mytilene) and the Crimean peninsula, which areas I do not think belong to the Balkans proper and thus, I have excluded them from the table. In my opinion, it is very important to have the figures from these registers correspond to the original data because they are quoted by every study on Ottoman population. For example, H. nalçık (nalçık and Quataert, *History*, 26, Table I:1) has quoted the figures of Barkan, which are, as already mentioned, outdated for 1490–91. nalçık has, on top of that, Todorov’s old figure for 1490 instead of Barkan’s more accurate one, and has switched one of the figures—“groups subject to lower rates of *cizye*”—from 1490 to 1491. Thus, we have a completely new set of data, which, given the authority of the volume, will inevitably serve as the basis of scholarship in the years to come.

⁴⁷ I have followed Todorov’s distribution of regions described in the register to *sancaks*. I have added, however, the regions missing in his breakdown by *sancaks* but present in the register and the regions missing from his register but present in Barkan’s data. The changes are as follows: new headings—Smederevo (including the Vlachs of Smederevo as well), Gypsies, *Muaf* (only *ispence*-paying *reyaya*) and Miscellaneous (includes some *vakf* villages, 9 villages around Istanbul and Akkermanians living in Istanbul); additions to *sancaks*—Melnik, u man, Jenice Gümülcine and Maden-i Nejlilova to Pasha *sancak*, Toplice and the Vlachs of Pri tina to the *sancak* of Vulchitrn, zvečan, vraca, Ras, Bazar-i Haddadin, Bistriçe, Migliç, Maden-i Preskova, Maden-i Gosçaniçe and Maden-i rjana to the *sancak* of Prizren, Ni to the *sancak* of Krushevac, Gebran-i perakende to the *sancak* of Bosnia, the Vlachs of Hercegovina to the *sancak* of Hercegovina and Yeni ehir (Larissa) to the *sancak* of Trikala. Given the very small fluctuation in the numbers of *hanes* for each region year to year, I have also filled the missing numbers in some regions in 1488 and 1491 with data from 1489 and 1490 respectively, something which Barkan also sug-

Table 1 (*cont.*)

<i>Sanca</i>	1488	1488 new Muslims	1489	1489 new Muslims	1490	1490 new Muslims	1491
Silistra	12,283		12,283		12,283	3	12,481
Nikopol	16,557		16,557		16,557		18,208
Vidin	10,578		10,784		10,784		10,639
Sofia	18,673		18,675		18,675	9	19,226
Kustendil	40,787		40,807		40,807		43,441
Krusevac	42,511		42,452		42,452		43,912
Vulchitrn	30,163		30,214		30,108	5	29,890
Prizren	30,182		29,939		29,924	1	30,196
Bosnia	21,846		21,782		21,764	99	20,546
Herzegovina	29,551		29,127		28,788	62	28,112
	(6,987)						(7,007)
Shkodra	11,984		11,984		11,988		12,720
Dukagin	(1,594)		1,594		1,594		1,550
Ohrid	22,958		23,170		23,170	11	24,259
Elbasan	10,492		10,577		10,718		11,530
Vlora	35,402		35,902		35,922	12	38,423
Janina	29,008		29,026		29,026		30,673
Trikala	40,119		40,217		40,217		42,346
Eubea	17,749		17,698		17,724	2	19,744
Morea	30,750		30,656		30,106		29,743
Preveza	21,894		21,981		21,981		23,219
Gypsies	5,954		5,859		5,699	12	5,721
							(3,398)
<i>Muaf</i> (only <i>ispence</i> paying <i>reaya</i>)	19,079		19,177		18,760		(18,760)
Miscellaneous	15,729		15,525		15,230		(5,915)
	(5,759)				(15,230)		
Total	665,622	7	665,576	94	664,463	229	686,129
	(642,544)	0.001%	(665,576)	0.01%	(659,648)	0.03%	(632,531)

Based on the figures from the above table we can draw the following conclusions. First, there was a 3.0 percent increase over the three year period in the non-Muslim population, which is comparable with

gests (Barkan, *op. cit.*, 15). Thus, misleading, large fluctuations in the total numbers of *hanes* from year to year are avoided. To reflect the original figures given in the registers, I have put in brackets the figure that should be subtracted to arrive at the actual figure. The figures in brackets in the last row are the actual totals from the registers. The new Muslims for the years 1488 and 1489 are given by Barkan only as totals (Barkan, *op. cit.*, 13).



Map 1. Ottoman *sancaks* and major towns at the end of the 15th century

the spectacular general population increase observed in the sixteenth century (see below). This confirms our conclusion as to the non-disruptive impact of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. Second, the conversion rates of 0.01 to 0.03 percent per year are indicative of the conversion process having been in its very beginnings. Only in Bosnia and Herzegovina can one observe relatively higher levels, despite the recent conquest of the two regions. In my opinion, we can conclude that conversion to Islam in the fifteenth-century Balkans was still in the period of “innovators,” i.e., a situation where no more than 2.5 percent of the population had converted to Islam by the end of the century.

The Demographic Situation in the Balkans in the Sixteenth Century

The next period for which there is sufficient information from tax registers for the Balkan population is 1520–1535. This information is more comprehensive than that available for 1488–91 because it includes not only the non-Muslim population but the Muslim population as well. Based on data provided by Barkan,⁴⁸ I have calculated the tax-paying population of the Balkans to have been constituted during this period of 844,777 non-Muslim *hanes* (77.8 percent) and 242,109 Muslim *hanes* (22.2 percent).

Table 2. Balkan population in 1520–1535 by *sancak*⁴⁹

<i>Sancaks</i>	Christian households	%	Muslim households	%	Jewish households	%	Total
Pasha	183,512	72.5	66,684	26.3	2,998	1.2	253,194
Smederevo	106,861	97.8	2,367	2.2			109,228
Trikala	57,671	81.9	12,345	17.5	387	0.5	70,405
Kjustendil	56,988	89.5	6,640	10.4	49	0.1	63,677
Morea	49,412	97.0	1,065	2.1	464	0.9	50,941
Nikopol	31,891	77.4	9,122	22.1	206	0.5	41,219
Bosnia	19,619	53.7	16,935	46.3			36,554
Eubea	33,065	98.0	663	2			33,728
Janina	32,097	98.1	613	1.9			32,710
Krushevac	25,759	96.7	881	3.3			26,640
Sofia	24,311	93.9	1,569	6.1			25,910
Shkodra	23,859	95.5	1,116	4.5			24,975
Ohrid	32,748	98.1	641	1.9			33,389
Prizren	18,382	98.1	359	1.9			18,741
Herzegovina	9,588	57.5	7,077	42.5			16,665
Zvornik	13,112	83.2	2,654	16.8			15,766
Tchirmen	1,578	11.1	12,686	88.9			14,264
Preveza	11,395	99.9	7	0.1			11,402
Elbasan	8,916	94.4	526	5.6			9,442

⁴⁸ Barkan, "Essai," 32, Table 6.

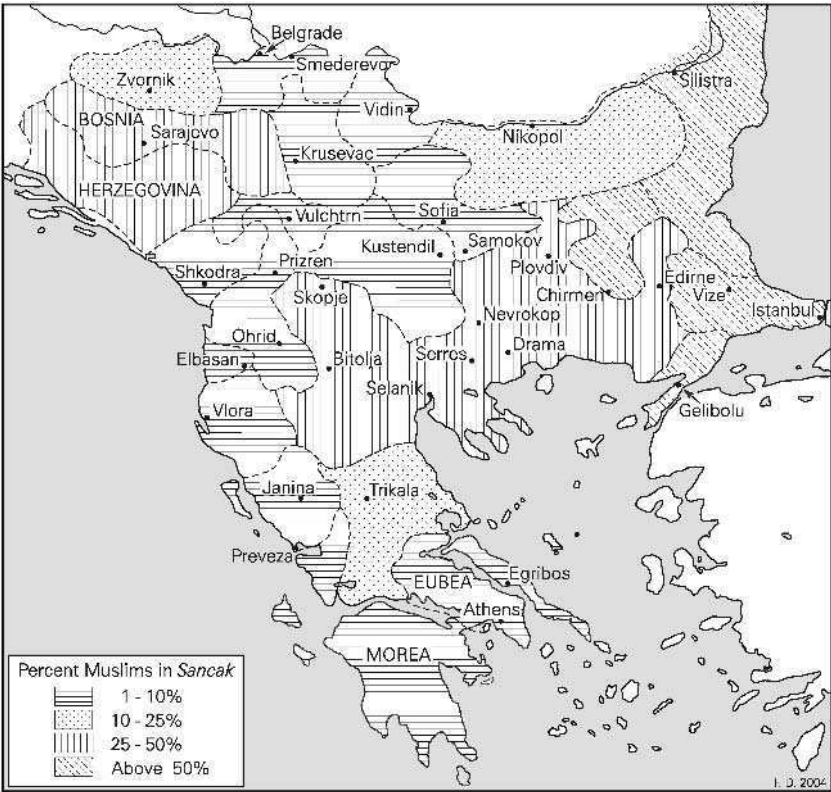
⁴⁹ I have again excluded the population of the island of Mytilene (Midilli), the Crimean peninsula (Cafa) and the islands of Rhodos and Cos (Istanköy), which were only administratively attached to the Balkans (see Barkan, "Essai," 33). The table includes some population with military status—82,692 *hanes* of Christian auxiliary troops—*voynouks*, *martolos*, and Vlachs (Christian nomads with military duties) and 1,252 *hanes* of Muslims with special military status in the population of Smederevo, as well as 12,105 *hanes müsellems* and *yürüks* (Muslim nomads). It does not include the estimated 50,000 households of *timar*-holders and fortress guards. In "Miscellaneous," I include the estimated tax-paying population of Istanbul, the *sancaks* of Kilis and Pojaga, and three *kazas* of Herzegovina (Barkan, "Essai," 33).

Table 2 (cont.)

<i>Sancaks</i>	Christian households	%	Muslim households	%	Jewish households	%	Total
Gallipoli	3,901	43.7	5,001	56	23	0.3	8,925
Montenegro	3,446	100					3,446
Silistra	6,615	27.7	17,295	72.3			23,910
Vize	9,467	43.7	12,193	56.3			21,660
Vidin	19,517	95.5	914	4.5			20,438
Vuchitrn	18,914	96.4	700	3.6	7		19,614
Dukagin	1,829	100					1,829
Gypsies	10,294	59.9	6,897	40.1			17,191
Kizilca			5,157	100			5,157
<i>Müsellems</i>							
Misc.	3,000	37.5	50,000	62.5			
Total	844,777	77.4%	242,109	22.2%	4,134	0.4%	1,091,020

Judging from the above two tables, the non-Muslim population increased over the thirty-year period 1491–1520 by a total of 132,782 *hanes* (excluding the population of Istanbul), thus at an average rate of 0.65 percent per year. This is a slower rate of growth when compared to the overall population increase of 1.0 percent per year in the period 1520–1570,⁵⁰ and to that of the non-Muslim population, which we observed at the end of the fifteenth century. The most plausible explanation for this difference is that the rate of conversion increased to a point at which it affected the overall growth of the non-Muslim population. Table 2, however, does not reveal the numbers of converts to Islam. We can only observe that, in 1520, the Muslim population stood at more than 20.0 percent of the total population. The question that arises is: To what extent did this population consist of Muslim immigrants to the Balkans and to what extent was it comprised of converts to Islam? Nevertheless, we are once again faced with contradictory theories about the migration of Muslims in the Balkans.

⁵⁰ Ö. Barkan, "Research on the Ottoman Fiscal Surveys," in M. Cook, ed., *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East* (London, 1970), 169.



Map 2. Distribution of Muslims by *sancaks* in 1525⁵¹

Colonization and Conversion in the Balkans

According to Barkan, the significant number of Muslims living in the Balkans at the beginning of the sixteenth century was the result of a large number of Muslims having migrated there from Asia Minor in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He describes this phenomenon as “colonization.”⁵² Indeed, there are numerous references in Ottoman chronicles to the migration of nomadic tribes

⁵¹ Adapted by Donald Pitcher, *Historical geography of the Ottoman Empire: from Earliest Times to the End of the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden, 1968).

⁵² See Barkan, “Sürgünler,” 231, and the references given there.

from Asia Minor to the Balkans, starting in the period of Sultan Murad I (1360–1389), i.e., almost from the beginning of the Ottoman presence there. Another wave of nomads arrived in the Balkans at the beginning of the fifteenth century, driven west by Timur's invasion of Asia Minor.⁵³ Barkan, however, is not able to point to any reliable figures, other than the ones given by the chronicles, i.e., 30,000 to 50,000 mounted soldiers.⁵⁴

Voicing the opposite opinion, Todorov argues that Muslim migration to the Balkans was not significant.⁵⁵ Based on a study by Gökbilgin,⁵⁶ Todorov emphasizes the small number of Muslim nomads present in the Balkans to prove his point (Table 3). In 1543, the only year for which complete data exists, there were 1,305 nomadic (*yürük*) units (*ocaks*) in the Balkans, consisting of 10 to 40 people each. This, Todorov agrees, is comparable with the figure of 37,435 *yürük hanes* residing in the Balkans, given by Barkan for the period 1520–1535. Nevertheless, it represents only a small portion of the total Muslim population at the time—15 percent,⁵⁷ and only 3.5 percent of the total Balkan population. By comparison, the Muslim nomads in the province of Anadolu (Western Asia Minor) for the same period numbered 77,268, i.e., 20 percent of the Muslim population and 16 percent of the total population.⁵⁸ According to Todorov, the variations in the number of Balkan *yürüks* in the sixteenth century are indicative of the scale of Muslim migration.

⁵³ Ibid., 213.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Todorov and Velkov, *Situation démographique*, 30–34.

⁵⁶ M. Gökbilgin, *Rumili'de Yürükler*.

⁵⁷ Other scholars utilizing Barkan's data usually cite the figure of 19 percent, perhaps overlooking the Balkan Muslim population extrapolated by Barkan that I have included under the heading Miscellaneous, in Table 2 above. First, S. Vryonis, "Changes," 165, came up with this figure, and then others repeated it—see, P. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354–1804* (Seattle, London, 1977), 50:n12–51.

⁵⁸ Barkan, "Essai," 30.

Table 3. Number of Balkan *yürük* units (*ocaks*) in the sixteenth century

Division ⁵⁹	Number of <i>ocaks</i> in each year			
	1543	1566	1585	1609
Naldöken	196	216	242	112
Tanrıda	328		424	87
Selanik	500			
Ovtche Pole	116	97		88
Vize	39	41		30
Kocacık	126	179	154	18
Total	1,305	533	820	335

Although the number of *ocaks* increased in the sixteenth century, this was due to absorption of the Islamized local population into the *ocaks*, rather than new migrations.⁶⁰ The small number of *ocaks* at the beginning of the seventeenth century speaks for a process of sedentarization and perhaps even return of Turkic nomads to Anatolia.⁶¹ Thus, Todorov concludes, it is conversion to Islam that led to the large share of the Muslim population at the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁶²

I believe, however, that it is too simplistic to consider Muslim migration to the Balkans as represented only by nomads. Barkan, for example, points also to another group of Muslim settlers in the region—the members of the Sufi orders, many of whom accompanied the Ottoman army.⁶³ To support their activities and to keep them under control, the mostly heterodox dervishes were granted abandoned lands as *vakıfs* and tax privileges.⁶⁴ Zelyazkova is right to argue that it is very unlikely that dervishes were ever numerous enough to call them “dervish-colonizers.”⁶⁵ Rather, she proposes the term “dervish-missionaries” as more appropriate. However, she also

⁵⁹ The *yürüks* were organized into six divisions named after the region in which they were located or by the old tribal name of the nomads who migrated there.

⁶⁰ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 73.

⁶¹ Todorov and Velkov, *Situation démographique*, 34.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Barkan, “Vakıflar ve Temlikler.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 283. See also M. Kiel, “The Vakıfnâme of Rakkas Sinân Beg in Karnobat (Karın-âbâd) and the Ottoman Colonization of Bulgarian Thrace (14th–15th Century),” *OA*, 1 (1980), 15–31.

⁶⁵ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 60.

puts forward the hypothesis that a number of Muslim tradesmen and craftsmen, members of the *akhi* organizations in the urban centers of Asia Minor, were also among the first Muslim settlers in the Balkans.⁶⁶ A new study by E. Radushev seems to support this hypothesis.⁶⁷ Radushev gives as examples the 69 Muslim households in the town of Drama, the 32 Muslim households in the town of Zihna and the 535 Muslim households in the town of Serres, most of which were listed in an Ottoman register of 1478 as craftsmen.⁶⁸ According to the author, the pre-Islamic Turkic names of the heads of the households indicate their non-Balkan origin.⁶⁹ Moreover, Radushev points out that there was a migration of sedentary Muslims in the rural areas as well. The same register of 1478, for example, lists 57 Muslim households in the *kaza* of Yenice-i Karasu on the Aegean seashore as salt-makers (*tuzcular*).⁷⁰ The author points out that salt-makers were organized in a professional guild (*cemaat*) and that the craft required special skills, which were transferred from father to son. Thus, he concludes, despite the typically pre-Islamic Turkic names of most of the salt-makers—Sungur, Durmu, Yah i, etc.—they were not nomads.⁷¹ The salt-makers who came to settle in the area (where they founded a village—Tuzcu—another action quite untypical of nomads) already possessed the skill of salt-making. Most probably they had practiced their craft on the Asia Minor shore of the Aegean Sea. There was also the 29 households-strong *cemaat* of rice-growers (*çeltikçiler*) listed in the same register.⁷² According to the author, it is unlikely that these rice-growers sprang from the native population because rice was a plant unknown in the Balkans before the Ottomans. The “chiefs” (*reis*) of the rice-growing *cemaat* in 1478 were the brothers Halil and Ibrahim, who, according to the register, possessed a sultanic decree allowing them to grow rice “like their fathers.”⁷³

⁶⁶ Ibid., 62.

⁶⁷ E. Radushev, “Rodopi,” 46–89.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 65, 67, 68.

⁶⁹ This may not have been the case because, as is pointed out by Bulliet, among converts to Islam in the central Islamic lands pre-Islamic Arab names were most popular among converts immediately after the conquest.

⁷⁰ E. Radushev, “Rodopi,” 61.

⁷¹ Ibid., 62. The register actually lists a group of households—*korucular*—whose task was to keep in check the nomads moving through the area and to prevent the straying of their livestock onto cultivated land. See Radushev, “Rodopi,” 63.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

Thus, I consider tenable the hypothesis that Muslim migration to the Balkans included, along with the nomadic groups and perhaps as numerous as them, a sedentary Muslim population from Asia Minor. Considering the figure of 3.5–4 percent as representing the proportion of nomads in the Balkan peninsula at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the number of Muslim immigrants to the Balkans and their descendants could have been as high as 7–8 percent of the total Balkan population.⁷⁴ The remaining 15–16 percent Muslim population would have consisted of converts and descendants of converts to Islam. Therefore, I conclude that by the middle of the sixteenth century the second stage in the process of conversion in the Balkans—the period of “early adopters”—had been completed. There were, of course, regional variations. In some areas—Bosnia and Herzegovina—more than 40 percent of the population had converted to Islam by the middle of the sixteenth century, while other areas such as Eubea, Janina and Prizren remained predominantly non-Muslim (see Table 2). In the western Rhodopes, 13 percent of the population had converted to Islam by the end of the 1530s, a figure which had risen to 29 percent by the close of the 1560s,⁷⁵ while in the *sancak* of Dukagin in northern Albania 16 percent of the population had converted by 1571.⁷⁶

To complete our discussion of the Muslim migration, I would like to recall to the reader Bulliet’s theory that the presence of Muslims in a particular area is a precondition for conversion to Islam (“access to information factor”). I argue that although neither minimal nor extensive, Muslim “colonization” of the Balkans was large enough to play a significant role in the process of Islamization there. For example, nine of the households in the *cemaat* of salt-makers, mentioned above, were registered as new Muslims—two sons of Abdullah, one still retaining his non-Muslim name and six freed slaves.⁷⁷ Among the 32 Muslim households of Zihna, there were two made up of

⁷⁴ Based on his figure of 19 percent Muslim nomads living in the Balkans in the sixteenth century (see note 57 above), Vryonis (“Changes,” 165–166) proposes that “perhaps 50% of the Balkan Muslim population of 1520–1530 had their origins (whether nomad or sedentary) in colonization from outside the peninsula.” The basic proposition, however, acquires an aura of authority in Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, 51, where we find it used along with the phrase “Vryonis argues convincingly.”

⁷⁵ Radushev, “Rodopi,” 78.

⁷⁶ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 89–90.

⁷⁷ Radushev, “Rodopi,” 62.

new Muslims and four of freed slaves.⁷⁸ We can also observe that a greater Muslim presence may be found in the areas with a greater concentration of *yürüks*—the sancaks of Pasha, Tchirmen, Silistra and Vize. On the other hand, in the western Balkan lands, where there is no registered migration of *yürüks*, with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Muslim presence was apparently only 2 to 5 percent of the total population throughout the 1520s.

Conversion in Urban and Rural Areas

The last question to be discussed with regard to the early period of Islamization in the Balkans is the conversion of the rural versus the urban population. It is the general perception of scholars that Islamization was more widespread in urban centers in the first two centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, while in rural areas Islamization was more pronounced in the subsequent centuries.⁷⁹ The data supplied by Barkan⁸⁰ for 12 important Balkan towns at the beginning of the sixteenth century seems to support this view (Table 4) and it is usually quoted in this connection.⁸¹ In eight of them, Muslims had an overwhelming majority while in the *sancaks* surrounding them the situation was reversed. In two towns—Nikopol and Trikala—Muslims were in the minority, but were still more numerous than in the surrounding *sancaks*, whereas in two cities—Athens and Selanik⁸²—Muslims constituted a much smaller minority than the numbers recorded for the *sancak*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁷⁹ Vryonis, "Changes," 163.

⁸⁰ Barkan, "Essai," 35.

⁸¹ See for example Vryonis, "Changes," 163.

⁸² Vryonis put Selanik in the first group—towns in which Muslims outnumbered Christians. Apparently, he disregarded the fact that there the 54 percent strong Jewish community was twice as large as its Muslim counterpart. See Vryonis, "Changes," 163.

Table 4. Population of 12 Balkan towns in the 1520s compared to the Muslim population in the *sancak* of each town's location⁸³

City	Muslim households	%	Christian households	%	Jewish households	%	%	Muslims in the <i>sancak</i>
Istanbul (1478)	9,517	58.2	5,162	31.6	1,647	10.2		
Edirne	3,338	82.1	522	12.8	201	5.1	26.3	(Pasha)
Selanik	1,229	25.2	989	20.5	2,645	54.3	26.3	(Pasha)
Sarajevo	1,024	100					46.3	(Bosnia)
Larissa	693	90.2	75	9.8			17.5	(Trikala)
Serres	671	61.3	357	32.8	65	5.9	26.3	(Pasha)
Bitolja	640	75.0	171	20.2	34	4.8	26.3	(Pasha)
Skopje	630	74.8	200	23.7	12	1.5	26.3	(Pasha)
Sofia	471	66.4	238	33.6			6.1	(Sofia)
Athens	11	0.5	2,286	99.5			2.0	(Eubea)
Nikopol	468	37.7	775	62.3			22.1	(Nikopol)
Trikala	301	36.3	343	41.5	181	22.2	17.5	(Trikala)

In conceptualizing the information in Table 4, however, we are faced with the same problem as we found regarding the data in Table 2. How many of the Muslims in these towns were local converts to Islam? How many of them originated from outside the peninsula? Sugar, for example, interpreting the data in Table 4 above, assigns more weight to colonization as a factor than to conversion.⁸⁴ Radushev also points to evidence of colonization being a larger factor in urban Muslim presence in the Balkans, and to conversion in rural areas outpacing conversion in urban areas.⁸⁵ A groundbreaking study in this regard is that of M. Sokolski, who has written about Islamization in Macedonia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁸⁶ In his study, he provides the number of first generation Muslims among the Muslim households in 33 *nahiyes* (subdistricts) of Macedonia during the second half of the sixteenth century, broken down by rural and urban areas (see Table 5). It should be pointed out that Macedonia is one of the regions in the Balkans that experienced significant Muslim colonization.⁸⁷

⁸³ The last column is derived from Table 2 above. Vryonis (and Sugar after him) has mistakenly put Bitolja (Manastir) and Skopje in the *sancak* of Kustendil instead of Pasha *sancak*. See Vryonis, "Changes," 164 and Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, 51: Table 1.

⁸⁴ Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, 51.

⁸⁵ Radushev, "Rodopi," 65–69.

⁸⁶ M. Sokolski, "Islamizacija u Makedoniji u XV i XVI veku [Islamization in Macedonia in the 15th and 16th centuries]," *Istoricheski Tčasopis* 22 (1975), 75–89.

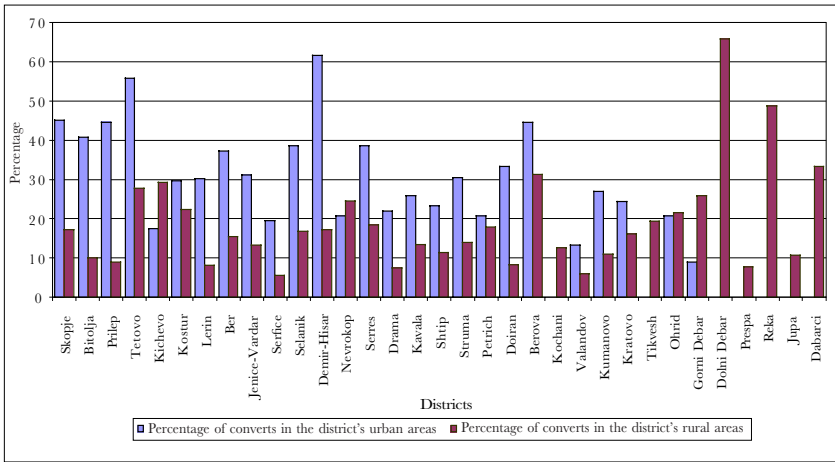
⁸⁷ According to Sokolski ("Islamizacija," 84), there had been 6,866 *yürük* households living in 19 Macedonian *nahiyes* in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Table 5. Number of first generation Muslims (in households) among the Muslim population in urban and rural areas of Macedonia, 1569–83⁸⁸

<i>Nahiye</i>	Urban Areas			Rural Areas			Total		
	Muslims	Converts	%	Muslims	Converts	%	Muslims	Converts	%
Skopje	1,551	701	45.2	1,001	172	17.2	2,552	873	34.2
Bitolja	608	248	40.8	561	56	10.0	1,169	304	26.0
Prilep	282	126	44.7	585	52	8.9	867	178	20.5
Tetovo	330	184	55.8	384	107	27.9	714	291	40.8
Kiçevo	80	14	17.5	99	29	29.3	179	43	24.0
Kostur	142	42	29.6	340	76	22.4	482	118	24.5
Lerin	182	55	30.2	2,188	179	8.2	2,370	234	9.9
Ber	384	143	37.2	194	30	15.5	578	173	29.9
Jenice-i									
Vardar	529	165	31.2	847	113	13.3	1,376	278	20.2
Serfice	87	17	19.5	1,191	67	5.6	1,278	84	6.6
Selanik	1,212	468	38.6	481	81	16.8	1,693	549	32.4
Demir									
Hisar	26	16	61.5	611	105	17.2	637	121	19.0
Nevrokop	304	63	20.7	1,725	422	24.5	2,029	485	23.9
Serres	824	318	38.6	351	65	18.5	1,175	383	32.6
Drama	205	45	22.0	2,019	150	7.4	2,224	195	8.8
Kavala	181	47	26.0	770	104	13.5	951	151	15.9
tip	449	105	23.4	1,181	135	11.4	1,630	240	14.7
Struma	442	135	30.5	705	99	14.0	1,147	234	20.4
Petriç	125	26	20.8	184	33	17.9	309	59	19.1
Doiran	81	27	33.3	266	22	8.3	347	49	14.1
Berova	9	4	44.4	32	10	31.3	41	14	34.1
Koçani	2	0	0.0	326	41	12.6	328	41	12.5
Valandovo	97	13	13.4	117	7	6.0	214	20	9.3
Kumanovo	52	14	26.9	555	61	11.0	607	75	12.4
Kratovo	303	74	24.4	80	13	16.3	383	87	22.7
Tikve	0	0	0.0	363	70	19.3	363	70	19.3
Ohrid	270	56	20.7	311	67	21.5	581	123	21.2
Gorni									
Debar	167	15	9.0	240	62	25.8	407	77	18.9
Dolni									
Debar	0	0	0.0	844	555	65.8	844	555	65.8
Prespa	0	0	0.0	89	7	7.9	89	7	7.9
Reka	0	0	0.0	193	94	48.7	193	94	48.7
Jupa	0	0	0.0	93	10	10.8	93	10	10.8
Dabarci	0	0	0.0	24	8	33.3	24	8	33.3
Average			29.9			16.3			21.5

The figures in Table 5 make clear the rapid progress of Islamization in cities. Among the 27 *nahiyes* with Muslim urban population, only three (11 percent) seem to have had a significantly greater presence

⁸⁸ Ibid., 86–88. The data is derived from three registers. The first 16 entries are from a register dated 1569, the next 11 from a register dated 1570 and the last 7 from a register dated 1583.



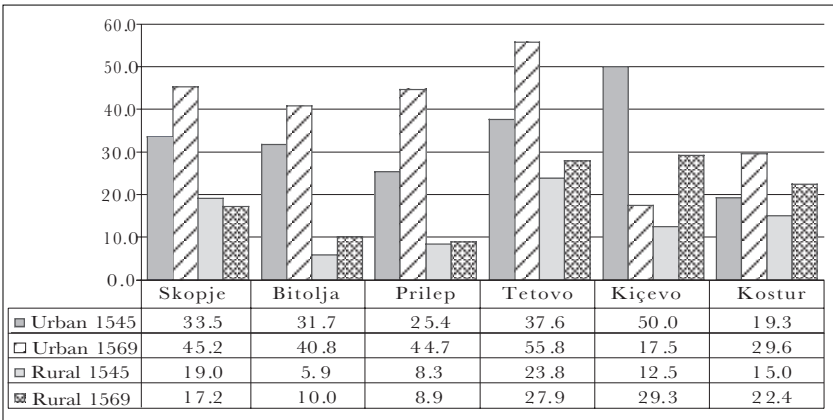
Graph 1. Comparison between percentages values of converts to Islam in urban and rural areas in Macedonia, 1569–1583

of first generation Muslims in the rural areas, six (22 percent) approximately the same proportions and eighteen (67 percent) anywhere from two to five times more new Muslims as a percentage of the population in the urban areas. Moreover, the bigger the urban area (e.g., Skopje, Bitolja, Tetovo, Serres, and Selanik), the more likely it was for new Muslims to constitute a larger segment of the population. The divergence between urban and rural areas with regard to the proportion of new Muslims is better represented by the two lines in Graph 1.

It is interesting to note, however, that in the six *nahiyes* without Muslim urban population the percentage of new Muslims is still quite high. In fact, the exclusively rural Muslim population of the *nahiye* of Dolni Debar registered the highest presence of new Muslims among all subdistricts—65.8 percent.

Sokolski provides data for another, more geographically limited but still valuable observation—the variation of the percentage of new Muslims in rural and urban areas of six *nahiyes* over a period of 25 years—1545–1569 (Graph 2).⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Sokolski, “Islamizacija,” 86–87.



Graph 2. Comparison between percentage of new Muslims in urban and rural areas of six *nahiyes* of Macedonia in 1545 and 1569

In 1569, the data shows an average increase of 30 percent in new Muslims in urban areas and 40 percent in rural areas, compared to 1545. Nevertheless, some regions stand out. For example, in 1569, the *nahiye* of Kiçevo had a smaller presence of new Muslims among its Muslim urban population than in 1545. The rate of increase of new Muslims in the rural areas of Kiçevo (230 percent), on the other hand, is significantly larger than the one observed in the other *nahiyes* for the same period. In the *nahiye* of Skopje, there is an insignificant drop in the presence of new Muslims in rural areas while in urban areas the increase is above the average for the period. In my opinion, the greater rate of increase of new Muslims in rural areas and the decrease in some urban areas indicates the beginning of a process which becomes much more pronounced in the seventeenth century, i.e., the increasing pace of conversion in the countryside.

Conversion in the Seventeenth Century

From the middle of the sixteenth century, the conversion to Islam in the Balkans seems to have entered its third period—"early majority." Unfortunately, it is more difficult to trace the gradual process of Islamization in the following centuries. The disintegration of the *timar* system led to a decrease in the number of *timar* registers—the

main sources of population statistics for the sixteenth century. To study demographic changes in the seventeenth century scholars are forced to utilize *cizye* registers as the only source for comprehensive statistics. For example, based on such registers, E. Grozdanova follows the demographic changes in the seventeenth century in 79 eastern Balkan tax districts (see Map 3), deriving from them data for more than 4500 villages.⁹⁰



Map 3. Seventeenth century administrative division⁹¹

⁹⁰ Grozdanova, *Narodnost*, 89–526.

⁹¹ Adapted by Pitcher, *Historical geography*.

Grozdanova observes that there is a decrease of 33.7 percent in the non-Muslim population in the seventeenth century.⁹² The decrease was more pronounced in the second half of the century with the decline in some areas reaching as high as 70 percent (Table 6).

Table 6. Changes in non-Muslim population in the seventeenth century in some areas in the eastern Balkan lands⁹³

<i>Vilayet</i>	Beginning 17c.	30–40s of 17c.	% change	50–90s of 17c.	% change	Total % change
Berkofça	3,860	3,966	2.7	2,401	-39.5	-37.8
Bitolja	4,838	4,433	-8.4	3,014	-32.0	-37.7
Vidin	5,007	5,248	4.8	4,078	-22.3	-18.6
Vranja	5,090	4,406	-13.4	1,200	-72.8	-76.4
vraca	3,729	2,821	-24.3	820	-70.9	-78.0
Demir Hisar	3,690	2,679	-27.4	1,300	-51.5	-64.8
Drama	1,908	1,609	-15.7	1,613	0.2	-15.5
Dupmiçe	4,908	4,562	-7.0	1,500	-67.1	-69.4
Znepole	3,647	3,077	-15.6	2,660	-13.6	-27.1
Zihna	3,544	3,393	-4.3	3,179	-6.3	-10.3
Korça	2,855	2,046	-28.3	3,300	61.3	15.6
Kostur (Kesriye)	4,016	3,949	-1.7	2,440	-38.2	-39.2
Kustendil	6,016	4,378	-27.2	2,659	-39.3	-55.8
Maleflova	4,372	1,800	-58.5	1,198	-33.4	-72.6
Melnik	1,127	665	-41.0	152	-77.1	-86.5
Ohrid	3,658	3,518	-3.8	2,250	-36.0	-38.5
Petriç	2,690	2,547	-5.3	1,438	-43.5	-46.5
Pirot (chirköy)	2,622	2,640	0.7	2,244	-15.0	-14.4
Prilep	1,630	1,704	4.5	1,500	-12.0	-8.0
Provadia	5,152	5,111	-0.8	5,720	11.9	11.0
Radomir	3,899	2,756	-29.3	1,388	-49.6	-64.4
Serfice	3,059	2,999	-2.0	2,000	-33.3	-34.6
Silistre	6,224	5,170	-16.9	2,537	-50.9	-59.2
Sofia	5,589	5,046	-9.7	3,945	-21.8	-29.4
Istrumiçe	2,912	2,980	2.3	1,149	-61.4	-60.5
Serres	4,332	4,505	4.0	4,354	-3.4	0.5
Tirново	4,657	4,442	-4.6	3,937	-11.4	-15.5

⁹² *Ibid.*, 526.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 518–521, Table 149. I have included in my table only 31 areas for which Grozdanova's data is complete and because of that the total change in percentage is different from the one arrived at by Grozdanova.

Table 6 (cont.)

<i>Vilayet</i>	Beginning 17c.	30–40s of 17c.	% change	50–90s of 17c.	% change	Total % change
Florina (Lerin)	2,194	2,328	6.1	1,700	-27.0	-22.5
Horpi te	5,188	3,880	-25.2	3,279	-15.5	-36.8
Hirsova	1,626	1,578	-3.0	954	-39.5	-41.3
tip	4,170	3,143	-24.6	1,778	-43.4	-57.4
Total	118,209	103,379	-12.5	71,687	-30.7	-39.4

Grozdanova offers four possible explanations for the decrease in non-Muslim population: 1) a greater rate of mortality because of epidemics; 2) emigration of large masses of population to other countries; 3) physical destruction as a result of repression and 4) a greater rate of conversion to Islam.⁹⁴ The author concludes, however, that it was conversion that played the most important role in the demographic changes.⁹⁵ Given the distribution of population in the area surveyed by Grozdanova—92.4 percent living in rural and only 7.6 in urban areas⁹⁶—the large decrease in the non-Muslim population means also that the dynamics of the conversion process, if singled out as the major factor behind demographic change, had reversed from the previous century. It could only have been this factor at work in the rural areas, where most of the population resided, that would account for such a dramatic change in the total non-Muslim population. In fact, the urban non-Muslim population in the area under study appears to have increased by almost double from the four percent observed in the previous century.⁹⁷

In a new study, however, Radushev questions the reliability of *cizye* registers as sources for surveying demographic changes.⁹⁸ First, they provide an opportunity to observe changes in only the non-Muslim community, while changes in the Muslim one are left to

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 526.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 586–87.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 503.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁹⁸ Radushev, “Smisalat,” 152–197.

speculations. Radushev stresses the danger of assuming that a decrease of population within the non-Muslim community would lead to an increase in the Muslim community, as Grozdanova had assumed. Citing evidence from eighteenth-century *avariz* registers from the Nevrokop region, which list both non-Muslim and Muslim population, Radushev points out that some villages, despite heavily decreasing in non-Muslim inhabitants in the seventeenth century, according to the *cizye* registers, are still registered as having only non-Muslim inhabitants or an insignificant number of Muslims.⁹⁹ *Avariz* register from the 1640s shows that Muslim population has undergone a similar process as well.¹⁰⁰ According to this register, between 1580 and 1642, the Christian population of the Zlatitsa region has declined by more than half but Muslims were down by whopping 36% as well. In other words, other demographic factors—most of all epidemics and famine—must have contributed substantially to the population decrease in the seventeenth century as well.

Second, according to Radushev, it is not at all known what number of people hides behind the fiscal term “*cizye hane*.” Most scholars, including Grozdanova,¹⁰¹ assume that it equals the basic family household, i.e., approximately 5 people. A comparison between a *cizye* and a detailed (*tahrir*) tax register for the *nahiye* of Turnovo from the 1620s shows the ratio between “regular” *hane* and *cizye hane* to be 2.33.¹⁰² Using this ratio for the region of Nevrokop in 1616, Radushev determines that its population is about 40 percent larger than Grozdanova had anticipated.¹⁰³ However, by the middle of the century the ratio changes to 1.01, which, using Radushev’s method of calculation, points out to even larger decrease in population than Grozdanova had shown.¹⁰⁴ In other words, conclusions, using *cizye hane*, with respect to changes in the population, can be rather deceiving.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Ibid., 164–169. See also Radushev, “Rodopi,” 55–56.

¹⁰⁰ Machiel Kiel, “Izladi/Zlatitsa. Population Changes, Colonization and Islamization in a Bulgarian Mountain Canton, 15th–19th Centuries,” in E. Radushev, Z. Kostova, V. Stoyanov, ed., *Studia Honorem Professoris Verae Mutafieva* (Sofia, 2001), 179.

¹⁰¹ Grozdanova, *Narodnost*, 70.

¹⁰² The actual figures are: 869 *cizye hane* vs. 2,027 *hanes* (1264 full households and 763 bachelor *hanes* respectively)—see Radushev, “Smisalat,” 177.

¹⁰³ Radushev, “Smisalat,” 183–184.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 177 and 185.

¹⁰⁵ Radushev gives numerous examples—one of them being for the village of Rosene in the *nahiye* of Turnovo. The detailed register of 1618–22 for the region

Conversion in the Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth-century *avariz* registers from the Nevrokop region point also to an interesting development. Villages, still with majority of non-Muslim population by the middle of the seventeenth century, underwent only partial Islamization until the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century and then remained predominantly Christian until the end of the Ottoman rule in the region.¹⁰⁶ That allows Radushev to conclude that the process of conversion that started in the fifteenth century had been completed, at least in the Nevrokop region, by the second quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁷

We can verify the above conclusion about completion of the process of conversion in the eighteenth century with the data published by B. McGowan.¹⁰⁸ The data is derived again from *cizye* registers. Nevertheless, there is a substantial difference between data derived from pre-eighteenth-century *cizye* registers and eighteenth-century ones in terms of the greater reliability of the latter. In 1691, the collection of *cizye* was reorganized by the Ottoman government. Instead of being collected on a household basis, a method tolerated for fiscal convenience, the tax began to be collected on an individual basis, i.e., from every able-bodied adult non-Muslim, as Islamic law had originally prescribed. The post-1691 *cizye* registers also follow a standard manner of presentation that inspires much more confidence in comparing data from one register to another.¹⁰⁹ The territorial consistency from register to register allows McGowan to divide the European provinces of the empire, i.e., the Balkans, into five zones—1) north-west (NW); 2) south-west (SW); 3) far north-east (FNE); 4) near north-east (NE); and 5) south-east (SE). The north-western zone comprises roughly the territories of today's Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia,

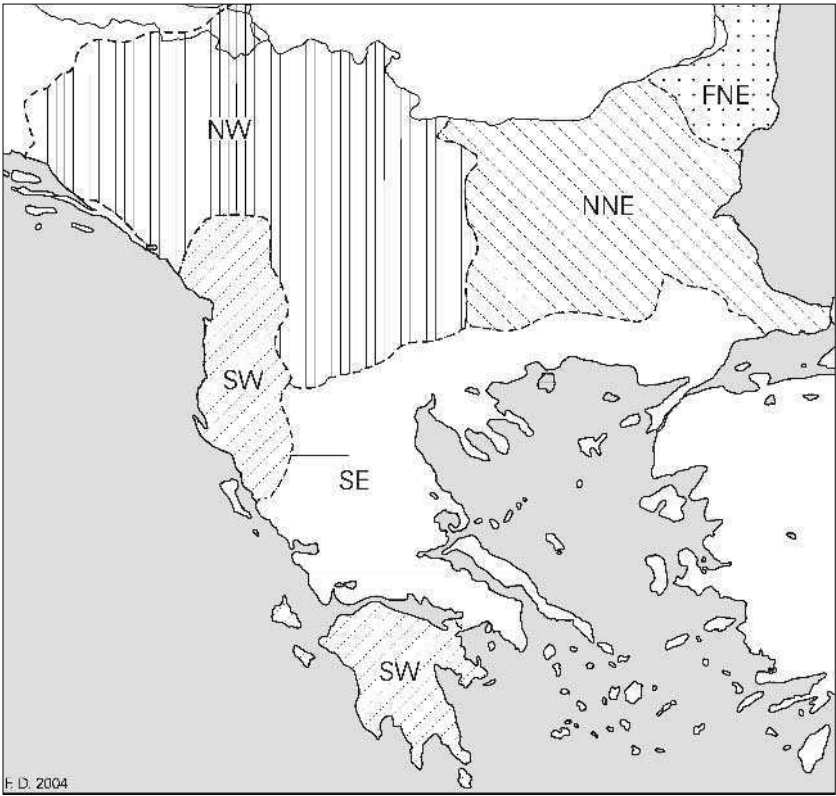
lists 96 households and 29 bachelors in the village, which corresponds to 60 *cizye hanes* in the *cizye* register. About twenty years later, a *cizye* register of 1639 indicates an increase of 12 *cizye hanes* (to the total of 72), while a detailed *avariz* register of 1642 actually shows 59 Christian household remaining, i.e., a decrease of 37 households—see Radushev, “Smisalat,” 182.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁰⁷ Radushev, “Rodopi,” 76 and 85–89.

¹⁰⁸ Bruce McGowan, “Head Tax Data for Ottoman Europe, 1700–1815,” in *idem*, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1981), 80–104.

¹⁰⁹ McGowan, “Head Tax,” 81–83.



Map 4. Population zones in the eighteenth century

Macedonia and western Bulgaria; the south-western—Albania and the Morea; the far north-eastern—Dobrudja; the near north-eastern—eastern Bulgaria (without Dobrudja) and the eastern half of the European part of Turkey; and the south-eastern—Greece (without the Morea) and the western part of European Turkey (Map 4).

According to McGowan,¹¹⁰ the non-Muslim population of the Balkans as a whole increased by almost 50 percent over the course of the eighteenth century (see Table 7). Such an increase is in sharp contrast to the decline observed in the sixteenth and especially in the seventeenth centuries. Puzzled by the “demographic collapse”

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

Table 7. *Cizye*-paying non-Muslim Balkan population, 1700–1815¹¹¹

Year Zone	1700	1720	% Cng.	1740	% Cng.	1788	% Cng.	1815	% Cng.	Total Cng.
NW	94,470	154,670	63.7	203,549	31.6	280,015	37.6	307,407	9.8	225.4
NE	182,199	169,112	-7.2	180,843	6.9	193,851	7.2	211,936	9.3	16.3
FNE	37,863	33,660	-11.1	34,893	3.7	33,924	-2.8	35,132	3.6	-7.2
SW	128,943	123,704	-4.1	113,468	-8.3	107,425	-5.3	105,772	-1.5	-18.0
SE	192,360	202,170	5.1	224,169	10.9	253,433	13.1	272,075	7.4	41.4
Total	635,835	683,316	7.5	756,949	10.8	868,648	14.8	932,322	7.3	46.6

which extended until 1700, McGowan¹¹² suggests the operation of factors such as epidemics and famine.¹¹³ There is no doubt, as pointed out above, that these two factors played an important role in the demographic processes in the Balkans. They cannot be limited, however, only to the seventeenth century. War, destruction, ensuing famines and epidemics continued to be a characteristic feature of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries as well. According to D. Panzac,¹¹⁴ the north-west zone, which had the highest recorded population growth in the eighteenth century, was one of the areas which suffered most from outbreaks of the plague in the period 1700–1850—23 outbreaks lasting 59 years in total. On the other hand, in the south-west zone, the Morea, which experienced a significant decrease in its non-Muslim population, suffered the least from the plague in the period under consideration. In my opinion, the gradual depletion until 1700 and subsequent rebound of the non-Muslim population can be explained only in light of the main demographic process

¹¹¹ See *ibid.*, Appendix: Official totals of head tax receipts held by the non-Muslim population of Ottoman Europe, 1700–1815. Because most of the SW zone is listed together with Yeni ehîr of the SE zone in the registers of 1700, McGowan gives only the combined total of 321,303 for the two zones in the latter year. I have calculated, however, the average growth in the other areas of the SE zone in the period 1700–20 to be 4.7 percent. I surmise then a population of 192,360 for the SE zone and 128,943 for the SW zone in 1700. The table includes also an extrapolated 80,000 for the Morea (SW), 3,000 for Athens, and 3,000 for Gümülcine (SE) in 1700; 20,000 for Belgrade (NW) and 3,000 for small Geçidi (FNE) in 1815—see *ibid.*, 103.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 83–85.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 85–87.

¹¹⁴ D. Panzac, *La peste dans l'Empire Ottoman, 1700–1850* (Leuven, 1985), 189–199.

in the Balkans from the fifteenth century onwards, i.e., Islamization. I interpret McGowan's figures as follows.

The spectacular growth in the north-western zone is the result of: 1) northward migration from the other zones, mostly from the mountainous areas of the south-west (Albania) to Serbia and Bosnia;¹¹⁵ 2) natural increase; and 3) the completion (earlier than in the other zones) of the process of conversion in Bosnia and Serbia. The more modest growth in the south-eastern zone was the result again of the combination of natural increase and completion, or significant slowdown, of the Islamization process, but instead of immigration, there was a limited emigration northwards. The initial decrease (7.2 percent until 1720) in the north-east zone indicates the continuation of the process of conversion in the first quarter of the century and the subsequent strong rebound (25 percent between 1720 and 1815), its halt. Some immigration of Macedonians to this zone is also believed to have taken place.¹¹⁶ The same situation—decrease until 1720 and subsequent increase—is observable in the far north-east zone as well. The insignificant growth rate (4.4 percent between 1720 and 1815) and the slight decrease again in the period 1740–1788, can be attributed to the continuing process of Islamization¹¹⁷ and the devastation of the region during the 1771–74 Russian war.¹¹⁸ The south-west zone is the only one to show a negative growth throughout the period. This can be explained by: 1) the continuing process of Islamization among Albanians; 2) extensive emigration to the north-west zone; and 3) the devastation of the Morea by Albanian irregulars in the 1770s.¹¹⁹ The most important conclusion for this study is that the process of Islamization had either stopped or was about to stop in most of the Balkans by the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. It continued only in some peripheral and isolated areas, such as Albania and Dobrudja, until the end of the century. Put together, however, Albania and Dobrudja account for less than a 7 percent share of the total non-Muslim population in 1815

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 94 and the references given there.

¹¹⁷ McGowan mentions the (unusual by Rumelian standards) strength of the Muslim community in this region—*ibid.*, 91. See also Table 8, Silistra.

¹¹⁸ See H. nalçık, "Dobrudja," *EJ*².

¹¹⁹ McGowan, "Head Tax," 91.

and cannot therefore be deemed representative of the demographic development of the Balkans as a whole.

The Demographic Situation in the Balkans in the Nineteenth Century

Although individual conversions continued in the course of the nineteenth century, the ethno-religious balance came to a standstill in the second quarter of the century. From that point onwards, migrations played the major role in the demographic shaping of the peninsula. According to K. Karpat,¹²⁰ in 1831 the population in the provinces of Rumeli and Silistra consisted of close to 40 percent Muslims and 60 percent non-Muslims. This breakdown is reflected in Table 8, below.

Table 8. Population of Ottoman Balkans in 1831

Province	Christians	Muslims	Gypsies	Jews	Armenians	Total
Rumeli	686,991	337,001	25,126	9,955	2,099	1,061,172
%	64.7	31.8	2.4	0.9	0.2	
Silistra	96,342	150,970	8,779	178	0	256,269
%	37.6	58.9	3.4	0.1		
Total	783,333	487,971	33,905	10,133	2,099	1,317,441
%	59.5	37.0	2.6	0.8	0.1	

In the western Balkan regions, the Muslim presence appears also to have been significant. In Albania, Muslims constituted 70 percent of the population; in Kosovo, 72 percent; in Macedonia, almost 40 percent; and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 50 percent.¹²¹ By contrast, in Serbia and Greece, independent by 1831, the Muslim population had dwindled as a result of emigration to the areas still forming a part of the Ottoman empire. According to a Greek census of 1821, a total of 875,150 Christians and 63,614 Muslims (6.8 percent) were

¹²⁰ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 109–110. The older study of the census of 1831—F. Akbal, “1831 Tarihinde Osmanlı İmparatorlu unda dari Taksimat ve Nüfus,” Beleten, 15 (1951)—is now outdated.

¹²¹ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 141.

living there, whereas figures for 1828 show that there were only 11,450 Muslims left. In 1833, there were no more than 4,560 Muslims (0.8 percent) accounted for in Serbia.¹²²

The nineteenth century figures point to the process of Islamization in the Balkans as having differed markedly from elsewhere in the Muslim world in pre-Ottoman times. The Muslim community in the Balkans seems never to have achieved a majority. Despite its progress in some regions of the Balkans with predominantly Muslim population by the end of the eighteenth century, the process of conversion to Islam was halted in others at still lower stages in the process.

Here, we can again test the viability of Bulliet's theory. First, according to him, non-Muslim revolts are supposed to die down once the process of conversion passes the middle point. However, several non-Muslim communities achieved independence from the Ottoman state in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Second, once the "early majority" period is completed, i.e., the point when the Muslim population is 40 percent of the total population, control should slip from the hands of the central government and independent Muslim rulers should appear in the provinces. Indeed, the so-called period of *ayans* (local notables) started in the second quarter of the eighteenth century and several of them achieved a large degree of independence from the central government by the end of the century. However, the *ayans* were suppressed by the Ottoman government at the beginning of the nineteenth century as tighter control over the provinces was restored. These developments confirm the fact that the process of conversion in the Balkans came to a halt just before reaching the halfway mark.

Summary

1. The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans was similar to the Arab conquests in the seventh century in that it did not bring about a major disruption in the economic life of the peninsula. Conversion to Islam associated with the conquest, therefore, was minimal.

¹²² McGowan, "Head Tax," 202:n7.

2. Following the conquest, a certain degree of Muslim colonization, consisting of nomads and sedentary population, occurred in the Balkans. Although not as significant a factor as in Asia Minor, Muslim colonization played an important role in the spread of Islam in the Balkans during the early period of the Islamization process. The regions of Muslim settlement in general were those with a more advanced stage of conversion in the first half of the sixteenth century. By the second half of the sixteenth century, however, colonization had come to an end and the sedentarizaion of the remaining nomads in the Balkans followed shortly thereafter.
3. The first two periods of the conversion process—"innovators" and "early adopters"—were completed by the 1530s, i.e., after one century and a half. A characteristic of these periods was the more rapid pace of conversion in urban as compared to rural areas.
4. In the second half of the sixteenth century the process of conversion entered into its third period—"early majority." The pace of conversion increased especially in the 1640s. It was the conversion among the rural population that contributed most to the significant decrease of the non-Muslim population, although other factors, such as epidemics, may have played a role as well.
5. With the period of "early majority" almost completed by the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the process of conversion came to a sudden halt in most of the Balkans. Conversion continued only in some peripheral areas until the end of the century.
6. These peculiarities in the process of conversion left their mark on the historical evolution of the peninsula. Instead of the emergence of independent Muslim dynasties, several non-Muslim communities succeeded in gaining independence from the Ottoman state in the nineteenth century.
7. In the nineteenth century, conversion to Islam in the Balkans was sporadic. The demographic image of the peninsula was influenced only by the migration of Muslims from one area to another.

CHAPTER THREE

FORMS, FACTORS AND MOTIVES OF CONVERSION TO ISLAM IN THE BALKANS

Vryonis has commented that the statistical approach to the question of change in the religious life of the Balkans during the Ottoman period is of great value to the historian.¹ Nevertheless, he observes, such an approach can create only a two-dimensional image of history—that of a formal religious world, comprised of Muslims and non-Muslims. Statistics do not answer questions such as what pressure, if any, was involved in conversion, which segments of the society converted and for what reasons, or what was the quality of the converts' religious life. In the following pages, I shall address some of the major issues behind the forms, factors, and motives of conversion.

Forms of Conversion to Islam in the Ottoman Empire

Balkan scholarship has traditionally viewed the local population's affiliation to the Orthodox faith as a vehicle of their national consciousness.² This made extensive conversions to Islam and therefore a loss of national consciousness difficult to reconcile with the nationalistic fervor demonstrated by the Balkan peoples in the middle of the nineteenth century. Historical justification for conversion was found in the "aggressive nature" of the religion of Islam, expressed in the concept of Holy war (*cihad*). In other words, the conversions were deemed to have occurred under compulsion—whether direct or indirect. Thus, by presenting the Islamized native population as victims of persecution, the national pride of those who had remained Christian was preserved. The theory of forced, mass conversions—

¹ Vryonis, "Changes," 172.

² See for example, George G. Arnakis, "The Role of Religion in the Development of Balkan Nationalism," in Charles and Barbara Jelavich, ed., *The Balkans in Transition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), 115–44; and Grozdanova, *Bulgarskata narodnost*, 587–593.

what I call the “coercion theory”—has, therefore, much in common with the “catastrophe theory,” presented at the beginning of chapter two. Balkan historians portrayed the Ottoman state essentially as a repressive force whose goal was to de-nationalize the region by converting the native population to Islam. Literature stressing the coercive nature of Islamization ranges from works that blindly relay stereotypes without proper historical justification³ to works that weigh more the facts carefully and admit the operation of social and economic factors, yet still fail to break from the traditional schema. In his assessment of Bulgarian scholarship on Islamization,⁴ Radushev actually sees these two types of works as representing two distinct approaches—“revivalist-mythological” and “socio-economic.” In my view, however, the works that fall into the second category do not essentially depart from the central myth of the first category, i.e., the myth of “coercion.” Thus, I regard them as distinct only in terms of sophistication and level of scholarship.

Zelyazkova, in one of the most sophisticated examples of the “coercion theory,”⁵ carefully avoids using the term “voluntary” conversion to Islam by adopting the terms “direct” and “indirect” or “economic” coercion. “Direct” coercion, such as conversion through the institutions of slavery and *devirme*, is viewed as occurring “under the control and with the participation of the central government.”⁶ In this form of conversion “the possibility of personal choice, even less, of voluntarism, is entirely excluded.”⁷ Although other types of conversion are not instigated by the government and appear on the surface to be voluntary, they are still considered an “indirect” coercion

³ See for example, I. Snegarov, *Turskoto vladichestvo prechka za kulturnoto razvitiie na balgarskiya narod i drugite balkanski narodi* [The Turkish Rule as an Obstacle in the Cultural Development of the Bulgarian Nation and the other Balkan Nations] (Sofia, 1958); P. Petrov, *Sadbonosni vekove na bulgarskata narodnost* [Fateful Centuries for the Bulgarian Nation] (Sofia, 1975); idem, *Po sledite na nasiheto* [In the Footsteps of Terror] vol. 1 (Sofia, 1987) and Ivo Andric, *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule* (Durham, 1990).

⁴ Radushev, “Rodopi,” 51–60.

⁵ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*. It should be noted that Zelyazkova later confessed that she had conformed to the all-embracing totalitarian political culture in the years before the publication of the study. See, A. Zelyazkova, *Istoritsite—za istinata, za nasiliyata, za sebe si* [The Historians—About the Truth, the Terror, and Ourselves] (Sofia, 1994).

⁶ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 150.

⁷ Ibid.

because of the “forced integration of the conquered people into the structure of the imperial mechanism.”⁸

I. *The Institution of Slavery as a Method of Conversion to Islam*

According to Zelyazkova, the conversion of the Balkan population through enslavement was characteristic of the initial stages of Ottoman expansion into the Balkans, a process usually preceded by a particular region’s actual incorporation into the Ottoman state.⁹ Although undoubtedly the Ottomans would have regarded their prisoners of war as slaves, I have pointed out in chapter two that the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans was relatively peaceful and thus, it is unlikely that enslavement occurred on a scale capable of influencing the demographic development of the peninsula. To prove that eventually most of the slaves converted to Islam, Zelyazkova points to the practice among pious Muslims of freeing slaves upon their conversion and to the extensive Ottoman slave trade in later times.¹⁰ The methodological inconsistency of her argument is striking. In the first place, the actions of pious Muslims are taken as effected by the Muslim state and second, references to the Ottoman slave-trade concerning people from outside the Ottoman state, i.e., from the war zone (*darülharb*),¹¹ are deemed relevant to the conversion of Balkan residents, who had the status of a protected population once the conquest had been completed and therefore, could not be enslaved.¹² In his study on the ethnic background of Ottoman slaves in Bursa, H. Sahillio lu points out that the increase of slaves from a particular country comes when the later was engaged in war with the Ottoman state, while when the war was over such slaves were only rarely found.¹³ According to Sahillio lu, “once the state of war with a particular country has ended, even if with the occupation of the land of the enemy, the increase in the number of slaves from that

⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 151–52.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 152–53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 152–54.

¹² Halil Sahillio lu, “Slaves in the Social and Economic Life of Bursa in the Late 15th and Early 16th Centuries,” in *idem*, *Studies on Ottoman Economic and Social History* (Istanbul, 1999), 105.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 127 and 160–166.

country gradually lessened and finally their number became insignificant.”¹⁴ The occasional appearance of slaves from a country already incorporated in the Ottoman domain¹⁵ can only be explained by the latter being captured during civil disturbances allowing captives to be treated as prisoners of war again.¹⁶

Zelyazkova admits, nevertheless, that conversion of slaves was not always forced but that other factors, such as becoming a member of another social group—that of the freed slave (*atık, azadlı*)—was also a stimulus to conversion.¹⁷

II. *The Devirme Institution as a Method of Conversion to Islam*

In the case of the conversions to Islam through the institution of *devirme*, the proponents of the “coercion theory” seem to be correct in asserting that forced conversion on a large scale¹⁸ did indeed take place. The term *devirme* refers to the government levy of male children from the non-Muslim subject population, imposed periodically from the beginning of the fifteenth century onwards,¹⁹ designed to fill the ranks of the Janissary corps. The *devirme* was an Ottoman innovation; regulated only by sultanic law (*kanun*), it seems to be a flagrant disregard of the precepts of Islamic law touching on the status of the *zimmi*.²⁰ It may also have been possible that boys collected

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁵ For example, Sahillio lu’s data shows slaves of Bulgarian origin (already part of the Ottoman domain) as late as 1472—Sahillio lu, “Slaves,” 160–161.

¹⁶ See for relevant legal discourse *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shayb n ’s Siyar*, translated by Majid Khadduri (Baltimore, 1966), 219.

¹⁷ Zelayzkova, *Razprostranenie*, 152 and *idem*, “Islamization,” 259–260. See for similar observation Sahillio lu as well (*op. cit.*, 123–124).

¹⁸ The rate of collection of boys was one from every 40 households. Estimates in late Ottoman sources put the total number of converts to Islam through *devirme* at 200,000. See V.L. Ménage, *EI*², s.v. “Devshirme,” 212.

¹⁹ Although the earliest evidence of the *devirme* is from 1395, regular collections did not start before 1438—see S. Vryonis, “Isidor Glabas and the Turkish Devshirme,” *Speculum*, 31 (1956), 433–443. The boys were not collected from all strata of society or from all ethnic groups. Sons of urban families, craftsmen, and tradesman were excluded. It was the sons of non-Muslim peasants who supplied the bulk of the manpower for the Janissary corps. Further stipulations included the provision that a family could not be left without its only son and that only non-privileged *reyaya*, i.e., not supplying any special services to the state, were liable to *devirme*.

²⁰ See discussions in V.L. Ménage, “Some Notes on the Devshirme,” *BSOAS*, 29 (1966), 70–71; P. Wittek, “*Devirme* and *aria*,” *BSOAS* 7, 2 (1955), 271–78, and Vassilis Demetriades, “Some Thoughts on the Origins of the *Devirme*,” in *The Ottoman*

through the *dev irme* had a different legal status than boys bought as slaves or acquired through the *peñcik* as prisoners of war, i.e., the former may have been treated as freeman and not slaves, as the latter.²¹ In this case, the *dev irme* can be regarded as simple military conscription. For the Ottoman state, the institutionalization of the *dev irme* was simply a matter of cold-blooded practicality—the regular collection of boys from the subject peoples of the empire forestalled any irregularity in the supply of able-bodied troops.²²

It is not my intention to discuss here the institution of the *dev irme* in any detail.²³ Rather, I will focus my attention on the fate of the boys selected in this fashion. After being brought to the capital and formally converted to Islam, i.e., given Muslim names and circumcised, most of the boys were sent to Anatolia where they would

Emirate (1300–1389), ed. E. Zachariadou (Rethymnon, 1993), 23–31. According to Wittek, a justification of *dev irme* exists in Shafi'i law, namely, that Christians converted from paganism after the revelation of the Quran, i.e., the whole Balkan Slavic population, are not entitled to the status of *zimmi*. Demetriades puts forward the opinion that *dev irme* was justified by a custom going back to the early Ottoman times of frontier *bey*s, who have initiated the practice in their domains, with the sultans continuing an institution, “which had already been in force for several decades” and merely imitating the *uç-beyis*. Thus, as in the case with many other local taxes, the *dev irme* appears to be a continuation of a tax already in force.

²¹ While I can accept the argument that Shari'a did not mean much to the *gazis* and their lords (Demetriades, “Origins,” 29) in the fourteenth century, it is puzzling to me that the *dev irme* was not discussed in the sixteenth century by the Ottoman jurists trying to harmonize sultan law with the Shari'a. For those jurists, the question of the legality of the *dev irme* did not stir any controversy, unlike the legality of cash *vakyfs* or “the law of fratricide.” There must have been something to allow the Ottomans to steer away from controversy and preserving the freemen status of the collected from the subject population boys is certainly a possibility. The different legal status of the two groups of boys is clearly indicated by Konstantin Mihailovi (*Memoirs of a Janissary*, trans. Benjamin Stolz, commentary Svät Soucek (Ann Arbor, 1975), 159): “And the boys whom he takes in his own land are called *cilik*. Each one of them can leave his property to whomever he wants after his death. And those whom he takes among the enemies are called *pendik*. These latter after their deaths can leave nothing; rather, it goes to the emperor, except that if someone comports himself well and is so deserving that he be freed (italics mine), he may leave it to whomever the wants.”

²² See *Memoirs of a Janissary*, 158–59: “If however the number of them from enemy peoples does not suffice, then he takes from the Christians in every village in his land, who have boys . . .”

²³ The most detailed treatment of the subject is still the work of .H. Uzunçarılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Te kilâtından Kapıkulu Ocakları* (Ankara, 1943). See also Basilike Papouliá, *Ursprung und Wesen der “Knabenlese” im osmanischen Reich* (Munich, 1963); Ménage, “Devshirme”; G. Goodwin, *The Janissaries* (London, 1994); and Ts. Georgieva, *Enticharite v balgarskite zemi* [The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands] (Sofia, 1988).

spend several years before being admitted to the Janissary training schools in the capital as *acemi o lans* and still later into the elite corps of the army. The most promising were admitted right away to the palace school (*enderun mektebi*) as *iç o lans*; a very small number of these, after “graduating” through several levels of education, would become members of the personal entourage of the sultan. These were granted the highest posts in the state civil service.²⁴ Others occupied positions of lesser importance. Eventually, by the middle of the sixteenth century, a significant portion of the state apparatus had become staffed mostly with cadres recruited through the *dev irme*. In other words, the people drawn into the Janissary corps through the institution became in effect the ruling elite of the Ottoman state.²⁵

²⁴ It is a well-known fact that since the time of Mehmed II, when for the first time the office of the Grand Vizier was granted to a person of *dev irme* origin (Mahmud Pasha-i Veli, most probably a Serbian—see T. Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelovi (1452–1474)* (Leiden, 2001), 74–75), until the end of the seventeenth century, this office became the exclusive prerogative of people coming from *dev irme* circles. Several of these highly trusted people even succeeded in becoming sons-in-law to the sultan. See for the latter fact, U. Akkutay, *Enderun Mektebi* (Ankara, 1984), 109–114.

²⁵ This social standing somehow does not correspond to the designation of slave (*kul*), which was the appellation commonly attributed to the Janissaries in the sources. This designation is often misunderstood as corresponding to “slave” in the modern sense of the word, i.e., one bound in servitude as the property of a person, implying that the Janissaries always retained the legal status of slaves. There is evidence indeed that in the middle in the fifteenth century some of them were regarded as such according to Islamic law and could be officially manumitted—see for discussion Ménage, “Notes,” 66–70. As pointed out above, there might have been two categories of Janissaries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: freemen—those who were collected through the *dev irme*, and slaves—those acquired as slaves and prisoners of war. It seems, however, that by the middle of the seventeenth century either their legal status was irrelevant or the second category of Janissaries has disappeared. Paul Rycaut, for example, defines “*kul*” in the second half of the seventeenth century as: “Such as receive any wages or pay coming from the Exchequer, or any office depending on the Crown, have the title of *Kul*, . . . and it is more honourable than the condition and name of *Subject*” (P. Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1668), 8). Ménage (“Notes,” 66), following this definition and some other references to the “*kul*” as “one who is enrolled in state service,” proposes that “*kul*” has, in most contexts, the meaning of “servant” or even “officer.” In my view, however, these two words still bring to mind modern notions that do not correspond entirely to the Ottoman reality. I propose, after Radoshev, who refers to the *dev irme* recruited elite as “nomenklatura,” to describe them using the term “nomenklaturchik,” a synonym of “apparatchik,” i.e., a subordinate unquestionably loyal to the leader and also involved in the state apparatus. Radoshev has in mind the functional similarities between the Ottoman state organization and the recent totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe. See E. Radoshev, “Osmanskata upravlencheska nomenklatura prez XVI–XVII v. (Monopol na “devshirmetata” varhu

Neither this enviable (by contemporary standards) career path of the *dev irme* boys nor the needs of the state can ethically justify the collection and conversion of young people from the Balkan population in this organized fashion. By any standard, the removal of a boy from his family must have been a traumatic event for both parties.²⁶ Arnakis,²⁷ following Gibbons,²⁸ has even proposed that the threat of the *dev irme* spurred numerous conversions in the rural areas of Bosnia, Macedonia, Thessaly and Thrace. According to Arnakis, “the urge among the Christian peasants to keep their sons, who were more important to them than the faith of their forefathers, resulted in numerous conversions to Islam.” One wonders, however, if that was the case, why the most extensive conversion of peasants occurred in the seventeenth century, by which time the *dev irme* was only occasionally applied.²⁹

However, reactions to the *dev irme* probably differed from one period to the next. After all, the institution went through several stages of development in its almost three centuries of existence, as did the perception of Ottoman Muslims and non-Muslims of the *dev irme*. The first, formative, period of development coincided roughly with the creation of the Janissary corps in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. The Janissary corps were initially staffed by prisoners of war and later on by captive boys who had been given an Islamic upbringing, a practice fully in line with the “military slaves” tradition in pre-Ottoman Muslim states.³⁰ It is possible that Bayazid I

vlasta—parvi i vtori etap) [Ottoman Nomenklatura in the 15th–17th Centuries: *Devshirmes*’ Monopoly of Power—First and Second Period]” (manuscript). I thank the author for providing me with the manuscript of this provocative and original study.

²⁶ For example, in the collective historical memory of the Balkan peoples, the *dev irme* is known as “the tribute of blood”—see Ménage, “Notes,” 64. There are questions, however, as to how far back this historical memory dates and how it was formed. According to M. Kiel, this collective historical memory does not extend beyond the *karcali* upheavals at the end of the eighteenth century and that it was considerably shaped by the rise of nationalism among the Balkan peoples at the beginning of the nineteenth century—see Kiel, *Art and Society*, 44.

²⁷ Arnakis, “Religion,” 121.

²⁸ H.A. Gibbons, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1916), 118–119.

²⁹ Arnakis (“Religion,” 121) believes that Islamization was widespread in rural areas through the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while in urban commercial areas conversion to Islam was negligible. Obviously, he must have been unaware of some of the demographic information demonstrated in the preceding chapter.

³⁰ For the deployment of slaves for military purposes in early Islamic times, see P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (London, 1980).

was prompted to order the first collection of boys from the Balkan non-Muslim population in the last decade of the century because of a shortage of slaves in this period.³¹ By the time of Mehmed II, the *dev irme* was a regular practice, although not as frequent in its application as it was to become in the sixteenth century. In this formative period, the *dev irme* most likely aroused negative feelings in the affected population as well as within the Muslim community and especially in the Muslim landed aristocracy, which had by then established itself in Anatolia and Rumeli—*uc beyler*, *gazi* leaders, tribal chiefs, etc. The latter felt their political power threatened by the increasing influence of the Janissaries in political circles.³² This observation brings up once more the subject of the struggle between the *gazi-dervish* milieu and the centralist-conservative milieu discussed in chapter one. It was noted there that Balkan converts to Islam may have played a role in deciding the outcome of the conflict. This was achieved in the reign of Mehmed II with the latter's execution of the Grand Vizier Halil Çandarlı and some of the *bey*s, but more importantly by the severe limitations imposed at that time on private ownership of land (the aristocracy's prime source of economic power) and the establishment of state landownership as dominant.

From the time of Mehmed II until the end of the sixteenth century former *dev irme* recruits dominated Ottoman political life. As far as government cadres were concerned, it was at this time that the organizational principles and selection criteria were put in place. At the same time, the economic foundations of centralized government (state directed economy and finances) and the *dev irmes'* control over the state apparatus were firmly established.³³ As the main source of cadres for the military-bureaucratic state apparatus in this period, the *dev irme* institution evolved from being a periodic intake of military recruits to being the foundation of the Ottoman ruling elite.

In my opinion, in sixteenth-century *dev irme* institution aroused mixed feelings among non-Muslims and Muslims. It became evident for members of both communities that in addition to removing Christian children from their families and contributing to the increasing strength of the Muslim community, the *dev irme* was also a way

³¹ See Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, 57.

³² See for a similar observation H. nalçık, *ET*², s.v. "Ghul m, iv—Ottoman Empire," 1086.

³³ Radushev, "Nomenklatura," 53.

of breaking away from the status of *reaya* and moving into the privileged ruling class. It was, thus, a means of acquiring prestige, power and money. We have in this period evidence of Christian parents trying to bribe the heads of the units collecting children (*yaya-ba t*) to smuggle their sons into the ranks of the Janissaries, even though they did not meet the recruitment criteria, as well as of parents trying to buy their sons off.³⁴ Furthermore, since it is unlikely that the *dev irme* children (usually drafted between the ages of 14 to 18) would forget all about their origins, native land and relatives, it may have occurred to the parents of the *dev irmes* that certain advantages might follow the enrollment of their son in the Janissary corps, not only for the boy himself but also for the family as a whole.³⁵ The cases of Ibrahim Pasha, a *dev irme* of Greek origin, who held the office of Grand Vizier for thirteen years during the reign of Süleyman I, and who was known to have feathered his relatives' nests, and of Mehmed Sokollu, a Grand Vizier for fifteen years, who helped to establish a Serbian Archbishopric in Pe in 1557 with his brother as archbishop, are notorious. Moreover, as Sugar points out, "while the deeds of the most famous are the best known, it is more than likely that lesser grandees acted in a similar manner."³⁶ We might also mention the case of the Bosnian Muslims, who, despite being recently converted to Islam, requested that their children be eligible for the *dev irme*.³⁷ It is known, for instance, that as early as 1515, 1,000 boys of Bosnian Muslim parentage were drawn into the Janissary corps.³⁸ Obviously, at this point the *dev irme* was perceived by these people as a privilege.

A similar re-evaluation occurred in the Muslim community as well. On the one hand, opposition towards the *dev irme*-raised elite did not

³⁴ See Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, 58, and Ménage, "Devshirme," 212.

³⁵ See for discussion Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, 58. *nalcık* has even observed cases where relatives of the boys were exempted from paying the *cizye*. In other words, to have a child enrolled in the Janissary corps may have been regarded as a "quasi-military service," comparable to the other services performed by *derbentcis*, *voynuks*, *celepke ans*, etc., also entitling one to exemption from *cizye*—see, *nalcık*, "izya."

³⁶ *Ibid.* The subject of the *dev irmes*' influence in the everyday life of their native lands is very little investigated. According to Georgieva (*Enitcharite*, 93), the disinterest among Balkan scholars can be attributed to their perception of these boys as instruments of a foreign power.

³⁷ Ménage, "Devshirme," 211.

³⁸ *Ibid.* The sources specify that it was at least ensured that the boys were ignorant of Turkish.

disappear. Radushev, for example, cites numerous examples of resentment on the part of Muslims, especially in Anatolia, towards the Ottoman establishment, which in its “ethnic image appeared closer to the Christian *reaya* in the Balkans than to the Anatolian Turkomans.”³⁹ On the other hand, Muslims also realized that the *dev irme* was a way to climb the social ladder and tried to infiltrate the system. By the middle of the sixteenth century another process began—the enrolment of sons of *dev irmes* into the corps. The admission of freeborn Muslims into the Janissary corps characterized the next period of the development of the institution.

Hence the development of the *dev irme* institution in the second period consisted in its evolution from an institution of military importance only, into a major means of reproducing of the government apparatus. In the words of Radushev:

Over the giant abyss of social differentiation, the Ottomans built the bridge of the *dev irme* as means of realizing the connection important to every authoritarian regime between the masses and the ruling elite.⁴⁰

The next period, commencing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was a time of “total monopoly” of the *dev irmes* over the sources of power, political as well as economic, in the Ottoman state. This “total monopoly” of power was given concrete expression in the Janissaries’ successful elimination of Osman II (1618–1622), who apparently tried to cut down their influence over the political life of the state. In addition to its role in controlling the government apparatus, the influence of the *dev irmes* spread to the economic sphere as well. The latter development was realized through the system of tax farming (*iltizam*), which rapidly spread into the government sector of the economy at the end of the sixteenth century, replacing the *timar* system. The *iltizam* system placed the tax farmer in the position of exerting temporary fiscal control over particular sources of revenue, and created significant opportunities for the accumulation of money by financial speculation and the over-exploitation of taxpayers. The *iltizam* system appeared also to be the perfect solution for involving the political elite in the distribution of wealth in a state-oriented economy. It is not surprising that from the beginning of

³⁹ Radushev, “Nomenklatura,” 39.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

the seventeenth century onwards a significant portion of the tax farmers came from among the *dev irme*-raised ruling elite.⁴¹

In this period, the enrollment of the sons of previous *dev irmes* into the system (known as *kulo lu, ocakzade*) and other freeborn Muslims, who were registered as *kulkarde i* (brother of the *kul*) or *agaçira v* (apprentice of the *aga*), became regular practice.⁴² By the 1640s, the ranks of the Janissaries were so swollen with such people⁴³ that the regular collection of boys was no longer necessary.⁴⁴ Nevertheless,

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 48. An example of this symbiosis of political and economic power, cited by Radoshev, can be seen in the case of Hasan Pasha, who in 1620 obtained as a tax farm the whole province of Trablus am (with its center Tripoli, Lebanon). On his part, he was liable to the state treasury for the enormous amount of 33,760,000 *akçes*. However, at the same time Hasan Pasha was appointed as governor of the province; thus, after paying off his dues, he was able to exploit the economic resources of the province for himself. What he was able to make, we can only guess. This case is a typical example of the opportunities presented by the *iltizam* system to a successful member of the nomenklatura. The person in question was nobody else but the functionary Damad Hasan Pasha, the son of a Janissary from Çatalca. His career began in the palace school, and led to the positions of chief of the palace gatekeepers, chief of the imperial stables and then to the government positions of governor, admiral of the fleet and vizier. He succeeded in becoming also a member of the royal family—son-in-law (*damad*) of the sultan. The lower echelons of the nomenklatura, however, benefited as well, although on a smaller scale. Another example given by Radoshev is the collection of *cizye* from the Balkan provinces in 1600–1601. All tax collectors were from the ranks of the Janissaries of the six divisions in the capital (*altı bölük halkı*). The collection of *cizye* from the region of Nevrokop, for example, was entrusted to the *dev irmes* of the *silahdars*' division, native to the same region. In the region itself, they were assisted by the Janissary Korucu Baki Bey, living in the city of Nevrokop. He, in his turn, was a protégé of the *defterdar* of the province of Rumeli, Abdalbaki efendi, also of *dev irme* origin. The latter was obviously the highest-placed member of the nomenklatura in the chain and it was under his auspices that the tax collection was realized. There could be no doubt that all of the links in the nomenklatura chain profited from this operation. According to Radoshev, the nomenklatura controlled and benefited from state ownership to such extent that we can speak of “nomenklatura ownership” instead.

⁴² Because of the influx of people previously “not eligible” for the Janissary corps, by “*dev irmes*” in this period, I define those who went through the system of schooling, established in the previous centuries for the needs of the military and government apparatus, but who were no longer exclusively collected among the subject population through the *dev irme* or brought in as slaves.

⁴³ Evidence for this process is the sheer number of Janissaries. In the course of the fifteenth century, their number did not exceed 10,000. By the second half of the sixteenth century, it had risen only insignificantly—to 12,789 (in 1568) and 13,599 (in 1574). By the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, the number of Janissaries multiplied threefold—to 37,627 (1609) and had again doubled by the middle of the century—55,000 (1653). See Uzunçar ılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 611–20.

⁴⁴ Some scholars even believe that the *dev irme* was abrogated as early as 1638—see Ménage, “Devshirme,” 212.

collections occurred occasionally at least until the last quarter of the century, while references to the *dev irme* have been found even in the eighteenth century.⁴⁵

Another significant development from this period, and one that may not have been coincidental, arose in the last quarter of the seventeenth century when the levies of boys were abrogated. These were the attempts on the part of non-Muslims at entering the Janissary corps on a voluntary basis and converting to Islam for that purpose. This phenomenon, which I call “voluntary *dev irme*,” as well as the sources relating to it, will be the subject of detailed discussion in the following chapters.⁴⁶ In other words, according to my sources, although the organized collection of boys ceased, non-Muslims, through this “voluntary *dev irme*,” continued to supply to some extent the ranks of the Janissaries.

Interestingly, it seems that many of these “voluntary *dev irmes*” were not interested in pursuing a career but only in the prestige and tax privileges associated with Janissary status. This is evident from the large number of peasants in this period who appear to have been registered as Janissaries in the villages. For example, in a tax register of 1723 for the *kaza* of Nevrokop, we find that in the village of Nisonishte there were registered 30 Janissaries’ households out of a total of 73 Muslim households. In the village of Koprivlani, the proportion is 20 Janissaries’ households out of 46; in Lyalovo, 12 out of 23.⁴⁷ Similar figures can be cited for most of the Muslim villages of the region. These were not Janissaries who had been compelled to join, as is evident from the Muslim names of their fathers. Nor were they the sons of Janissaries sent to serve in the province, as can be seen from the amounts of agricultural land they were registered as possessing. The only explanation can be that these Janissaries were peasants with an *askeri* status. Their fathers must have voluntarily accepted Islam and enrolled in the Janissary corps during the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Such voluntary enrolment in the Janissary corps may have been preceded by voluntary enrolment of non-Muslims as early as the middle of the sixteenth century in the private households of high-ranking Ottoman dignitaries, a phenomenon termed by Kunt as “private *dev irme*.” See . Metin Kunt, “Transformation of Zimmi into *Askeri*,” in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, ed., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I, *The Central Lands* (New York, London, 1980), 62–63.

⁴⁷ BOA, *Mevkufat kalemi*, 2873, f. 33–36. I thank E. Radushev for providing me with a translation of this register. See also Radushev, “Rodopi,” 80.

last quarter of the seventeenth century, only to stay in their villages and continue to cultivate the land. An important fact to consider is soil fertility, which in this region is relatively low, such that a living can be made from the land only with difficulty.⁴⁸ Therefore, a Janissary's wages⁴⁹ combined with the fiscal privileges and benefits derived from serving as tax collectors, must, in effect, have made these people the elite of this rural society. That the status of Janissary still attracted converts from among the peasantry in the region and that the process of "voluntary *dev irme*" was still continuing in the 1720s is evident from the numerous Janissaries registered from this time with the name Abdullah as their father's name.

Perhaps this influx of peasants through the system of "voluntary *dev irme*," who lacked the desire for active military service or a political career, may explain why, from about the last quarter of the seventeenth century onwards, the political and economic power of the *dev irme* nomenklatura became increasingly challenged by members of the *ümera* households⁵⁰ and by the provincial elite, which had appeared on the scene and acquired considerable wealth in the preceding half century.

Despite its infrequent application in the period, due to the significant prestige and privileges enjoyed by the elite educated in the palace school and even lower-ranking nomenklatura in the Ottoman society, non-Muslims' perception of the *dev irme*, or of the possibility of conversion with the objective to enroll in sultan services, was largely changed. The fierce competition between Muslim, non-Muslim *reaya* and the sons of Janissary for admission to the corps as a guarantee of membership in the Ottoman establishment clearly indicates that the institution or any other method for enrolling in the palace school was no longer widely regarded as means of forcible removal and conversion of children.

In the light of the facts presented above, I am reluctant to evaluate the *dev irme* only in terms of the forced conversion and genetic

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁹ The daily Janissary wage according to the register was 7 *akçes*, i.e., 2,464 *akçes* a year.

⁵⁰ For the process of the infiltration of protégés of high-ranking Ottoman government officials into the state apparatus see R.A. Abou El-Haj, "The Ottoman Vezir and Pasha Households, 1683–1703: A Preliminary Report," *JAOS*, 94, 4 (1974), 438–47; and idem, *The Rebellion of 1703 and the Structure of Ottoman Politics* (Istanbul, 1984).

depletion of the Balkan peoples, but more as a powerful social institution for the integration of non-Muslims and Muslims into one realm—that of the Ottoman empire—and for the establishment of the Ottoman state in the period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵¹

III. *Punitive Actions as a Method of Conversion to Islam*

Another form of direct coercion, cited also by Zelyazkova, was the occurrence of forced conversions *en masse* as a result of military action.⁵² Nevertheless, she has to be given credit for doubting the accuracy of accounts of such events, which are now perceived as historical mythology.⁵³ Since no other myth, however, has had a greater role in shaping the Balkan peoples' perception of Ottoman rule and since no other subject has stirred more controversy in scholarly circles, I shall highlight some of the debate associated with it.

It has been maintained that the large Muslim population in some areas of Macedonia and the Rhodope Mountains (known as *pomaks* in the latter region) embraced the Muslim creed as a result of direct coercion. Indeed, a number of sources describe military actions leading to extensive conversions to Islam in these areas. Among these are: the chronicle note of the priest Metodi Draginov of the Rhodope village of Korovo⁵⁴ and its two variations (the so-called Pazardjik note⁵⁵ and the Belovo chronicle);⁵⁶ the chronicle published by the

⁵¹ See Radushev ("Nomenklatura," 13) for a similar conclusion.

⁵² Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 158–162.

⁵³ She has even devoted a study to the late origin of the sources supporting such stories. See A. Zelyazkova, "The Problem of the Authenticity of Some Domestic Sources on the Islamization of the Rhodopes, Deeply Rooted in Bulgarian Historiography," *Études Balkaniques*, 4 (1990), 105–111 and more recently "Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the Southeast-European Perspective," in F. Adanır and S. Faroqhi, ed., *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden, 2002), 223–267.

⁵⁴ Published in S. Zahariev, *Geografsko-istoriko-statisticheskoto opisanie na Tatar-Pazardzhikata kaaza* [Geographical-Historical-Statistical Description of the District of Tatar-Pazardjik] (Vienna, 1870).

⁵⁵ Published by G. Dimitrov, *Knyazestvo Bulgaria v istoricheskoto, geografskoto i etnografskoto otnoshenie* [The Principality of Bulgaria in Historical, Geographical and Ethnographical Treatment], vol. 1 (Plovdiv, 1894).

⁵⁶ N. Nachov, "List ot hronika, nameren v s. Golyamo Belovo [A Page of a Chronicle, Located in the Village of Golyamo Belovo]," *Bulgarski pregled*, 2 (1898), 149–151.

Russian scholar Lamanski;⁵⁷ and the copyist's addition to the chronicle of the monk Paisii of Hilendar.⁵⁸ According to these sources, non-Muslims were subjected to two major waves of repression—one in the first half of the sixteenth century under Selim I (1512–1520) and one in the second half of the seventeenth century under Mehmed IV (1648–1687).

Both the gloss on Paisii's chronicle and the Lamanski chronicle tell the story of the devastation of Thrace and the lands north of the Balkan Mountains in 1522 by armies under the command of the Crimean Khan Mehmed and of Selim I. They also speak of the forced mass conversion of the Christian inhabitants of the regions of Nevrokop and Çeç, Drama and Dospat in Macedonia by another army.

The chronicle of Metodi Draginov, corroborated by the Pazardjik Note and the Belovo chronicle, tells the story of the forced conversion of Christians in the Chepino region, located in the Rhodope Mountains, in greater detail. In May of 1666,⁵⁹ Ottoman troops under the command of the Rumeli *beylerbey* Pehlivan Mehmed Pasha marched through the Rhodopes in order to join other forces in the Morea in preparation for the Ottoman-Venetian struggle over the island of Crete. Learning on the way that the village of Kostandovo had refused to pay the required taxes to the Plovdiv bishopric, Mehmed detained the village notables and decided to execute them. However, one of his *imams*, Hasan *hoca*, suggested that they be pardoned on the condition they convert to Islam. The notables accepted this alternative. Mehmed then declared that upon his return from the campaign he would slaughter all Christians of the Chepino region unless they converted to Islam. Hasan, supported by Janissary troops, remained in the region to effect the conversion of the inhabitants of the seven Chepino villages and those of other mountain villages in the area. The conversion was aided by a famine. All who accepted the Muslim faith were given grain from government warehouses in

⁵⁷ V.I. Lamanskii, "Bolgarskaya slovestnost XVIII veka [Bulgarian Literature of the 18th Century]," *Jurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*, 145 (1869), 107–123.

⁵⁸ The original of the chronicle is preserved in the National Library of Bulgaria, MS 1112.

⁵⁹ The date mentioned in the chronicle is actually 1600. It was the editor and later commentators who interpreted it as 1666. The Pazardjik Note refers to the date as 1670. The reigning sultan mentioned in the chronicle, however, is Ahmed (1603–1617).

Pazardjik. The new converts were also given the right to pillage the properties of the Orthodox Church in the region, so that by August over two hundred churches and as many as thirty-three monasteries had been destroyed. Those who had refused conversion saw their homes destroyed and were forced as refugees into the mountains, where they founded new settlements.

For almost a century Balkan as well as western scholars have relied on these sources as truthful representations of Balkan history during the Ottoman period. Balkan scholars have readily embraced these descriptions of terror because they fit the historical myth of five centuries' continuous oppression by the Ottomans of their Christian subjects.⁶⁰ Western scholars too have accepted their argument, first, because of the large number of sources available, and second, because such events conformed to the general picture of the Ottoman Empire during this period, drawn by western historians. The latter have traditionally held that the conquest of the Middle East in the sixteenth century transformed the Ottoman state from a largely European to a Muslim empire, resulting in an increased emphasis on Islamic values. Then, frustration over unsuccessful wars in the mid-seventeenth century contributed again to the rise of hostility towards the Empire's non-Muslim subjects.⁶¹

It is significant, however, that all of the above-mentioned sources were authored by non-Muslims and that no corroboration can be found in Muslim sources for any forced conversions *en masse*. Ottoman chronicles only mention that Selim I and Murad IV indeed contemplated forced conversion of their non-Muslim subjects but were easily persuaded by the *ulema* and other state officials to abandon any such plans. Furthermore, there is the coincidence that both the chronicle of Metodi Draginov and that of Lamanski appeared at a time of intense anti-Greek and anti-Turkish national sentiment. It should also be noted that nobody except those responsible for publishing the latter sources has ever seen the originals. Ilia Todorov,

⁶⁰ See M. Drinov, "Otets Paisii. Negovoto vreme, negovata istoria i uchenicite mu [Father Paisii. His Era, his History and his Pupils]," *Periodičesko spisanie*, 1:12 (1871), 19; J. Hadzi-Vasiljevi, *Muslimani Na e Krv u Ju noi Srbiji* [Muslims of our Blood in South Serbia] (Belgrade, 1924); Snegarov, *Vladitchestvo*, 74–75; Petrov, *Sadbonosni vekove*, 62–121.

⁶¹ See Vryonis, "Religious Changes," 168, who totally relies on Petrov, *Assimilatorskata politika*. For similar observation see Hupchick, "Pomaks," 305–06.

moreover, based on linguistic analysis of Metodi Draginov's chronicle, concluded that it was from the first half of the nineteenth century.⁶² Also significant is the fact that the other two important sources preserved in original versions—the Belovo chronicle and the copy of Paisii's chronicle—have been also dated to the first half of the nineteenth century.⁶³ In other words, it looks as though the first two chronicles were most probably fabricated for the purpose of raising nationalist spirit, a practice in the tradition of the Romantic movement dominating intellectual life in Europe⁶⁴ during that time, while the other two were written late enough to be considered also a product of nationalist sentiment. The numerous inconsistencies between the names of the rulers and the periods depicted cast further doubt on the authenticity of these sources—in 1522, for example, Selim I was no longer alive, while Selim II had not yet been born; furthermore, the Crimean Khan Mehmed Giray could never have participated in a military action in the Balkans since his own throne was under threat at the time. These inconsistencies are not characteristic of other contemporary chronicles, whose authenticity is beyond doubt.⁶⁵ Moreover, while the authentic chronicles indeed point to an increase in violence against the Christian population, nowhere do they explicitly mention attempts at forced conversion.⁶⁶ The “small” discrepancies and doubts as to authenticity, however, did not seem to bother advocates of the “coercion theory,” who held that the accounts of the chronicles did indeed correspond to real events.⁶⁷ Since until recently it was not possible to verify or deny the historicity of these events through other sources, it was left to the per-

⁶² I. Todorov, “Letopisniyat razkaz na Metodi Draginov [The Chronicle Story of Metodi Draginov],” *Starobalgarska literatura*, 16 (1984), 62–75.

⁶³ H. Kodov, *Opis na slavyanskite rakopisi v bibliotekata na bulgarskata akademiya na naukite* [Catalogue of the Slavic Manuscripts in the Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences] (Sofia, 1969).

⁶⁴ The inventor of this “technique” was the Scotsman James Macpherson, the predecessor of the romantics, who published in 1765 his revised versions of Celtic sagas and legends as an authentic collection of works by the legendary warrior and bard Ossian. The most famous Balkan forgery is “Veda Slovena,” compiled in 1874 by the Bosnian Serb Stephen Verkovich.

⁶⁵ See M. Kiel, “The Spread of Islam in Bulgarian Rural Areas in the Ottoman Period (15th–18th Centuries): Colonization and Islamization,” in Rositsa Gradeva and Svetlana Ivanova, ed. *Musulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi. Izsledvaniya* [Islamic Culture in the Bulgarian Lands. Studies] (Sofia, 1998), 58.

⁶⁶ Hupchick, “Pomaks,” 310.

⁶⁷ Kiel, “Spread of Islam,” 59.

sonal judgment of scholars to choose one or the other alternative. Often, the prevailing ideological line dictated their decision.

In the last several years, however, researchers have brought to light archival evidence proving the spurious nature of the sources in question.⁶⁸ Radushev, on the basis of newly discovered registers, has shown that in the regions “forcibly” converted by Selim I Islamization occurred gradually over the course of two and a half centuries, meaning that mass conversion in the span of one year is out of question. In the region of Nevrokop, for example, conversions started at the end of the fifteenth century. By the 1530s, 13 percent of the population had accepted Islam, whereas by the 1560s, 29 percent had done so. In the seventeenth century, there was still a sizeable Christian population in the region according to the *cizye* registers, whereas by the start of the eighteenth century, when the Islamization process had effectively been completed, there were 10 villages with non-Muslim inhabitants, 24 with mixed population and 74 entirely Muslim.⁶⁹ In the region of Krupnik, there were still only 23 Muslim households, compared to 87 Christian—this in 1572, when the whole region was supposed to be entirely Muslim.⁷⁰ Kiel has also pointed out that contemporary Greek chronicles depict Selim I as a ruler who demonstrated a great deal of respect towards the Orthodox Church, which contrasts strongly with the image depicted of him in the chronicles.⁷¹

Again on the basis of registers, Kiel has shown that the conversion in the region of Chepino, supposed to have taken place over the course of three months in 1666, actually followed the pattern established for Nevrokop—the population having been 4 percent Muslim in 1516, 5 percent by 1528, 26 percent by 1570 and 31 percent by 1595. In the seventeenth century, registers depict the further dwindling of the Christian population—from 599 households in 1633 to 479 in 1641, and 207 in 1696. In 1712, there were only 96 Christian households, accounting for 11 percent of the population, versus 798 Muslim (89 percent).⁷² Furthermore, despite the practice of listing all priests in *cizye* registers, Kiel could not find a priest with

⁶⁸ Radushev, “Rodopi,” and Kiel, “Spread of Islam.”

⁶⁹ Radushev, “Rodopi,” 76.

⁷⁰ Kiel, “Spread of Islam,” 65.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 63–64.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 72–79.

the name Metodi Draginov listed for the region, nor do the records of the Orthodox Church show a bishop with the name Gavril as having served in Plovdiv at the time.⁷³

Thus, despite the fact that there have been subsequent attempts to resurrect the historicity of these events,⁷⁴ there is no doubt in my mind that the stories of mass conversion in Macedonia and the Rhodopes should only be regarded as an example of biased scholarship and historical mythology.

IV. *The Phenomenon of Neo-Martyrdom and Conversion to Islam*

An issue related to the discussion of whether conversion to Islam during the Ottoman period was voluntary or forced, is the phenomenon of neo-martyrdom. According to the annals of the Orthodox Church, many Balkan Christians achieved martyrdom through execution for refusing to surrender their Christian faith and accept Islam. To distinguish them from the martyrs who died in the period of early Christianity, they are referred to as neo-martyrs. The Greek *Lexicon of all the Saints* lists over 40 saints who suffered death for their faith at the hands of Muslims while the *Patriarchal List* gives the names of almost 100 neo-martyrs.⁷⁵ There are in addition several *vitas* composed for the neo-martyrs who died most heroically, e.g., the *Vita of Georgi Novi Sofijski* (d. 1515) by the priest Pejo and the *Vita of Nikola Novi Sofijski* (d. 1555) by Matei the Grammarian.⁷⁶ For those who only achieved local renown, the details are limited and are often semi-legendary.

As in the case of stories of forced mass conversions, we are faced with literary sources written for the sole purpose of showing the virtuousness of remaining a faithful Christian and inferiority of Muslims and Islam. It should be pointed out that neo-martyrdom was one of the few weapons at the disposal of the Orthodox Church to fight

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 68 and 77.

⁷⁴ See, E. Grozdanova, S. Andreev, "Falshifikat li e letopisniyat razkaz na pop Metodi Draginov? [Is the Chronicle of the Priest Metodi Draginov a Falsification?]," *Istoricheski pregled* 2 (1993), 146–157, who discovered in the Ottoman books of complaints references to a Greek bishop by the name Gavril based in Plovdiv. The tenure of this Gavril, however, began 10 years later than the event in question.

⁷⁵ Cited by F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (Oxford, 1929), 452.

⁷⁶ K. Ivanova, ed., *Stara bulgarska literatura* (Sofia, 1986), 291–376.

the spread of Islam among its followers. Neo-martyrs provided the Church with much-needed moral examples to reinforce Christian values. We can observe the close connection between the pace of Islamization in the Balkans and the numbers of neo-martyrs—there was, for example, only one neo-martyr in the fifteenth century, 15 in the sixteenth, 31 in the seventeenth, 39 in the eighteenth, and 7 in the nineteenth.⁷⁷ The question is, was the increase in the number of neo-martyrs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the result of the increased pace of conversions to Islam in those centuries, or the result of the need of the Church for neo-martyrs to resist Islamization? It is plausible that the Church actually prepared some of the martyrs as a sort of religious “kamikazes.” We know, for instance, of youths taken into monasteries, where they were prepared for years for the mission of dying for the faith.⁷⁸ These martyrs were motivated only by the passion for martyrdom and were fully prepared to blaspheme Islam and Mohammed in the presence of the *kadi*.⁷⁹ It seems that the plan was to have someone ready to convert to Islam in the first place, with the sole intention of apostatizing later. Moreover, the Church might have exerted pressure even on genuine apostates so that they too might achieve martyrdom. Although in Christianity apostasy is not punishable by death, as it is in Islam, according to Hasluck it was generally held that the guilt of apostasy could only be absolved by martyrdom and that permanent refuge in a monastery was impossible. When sufficiently fortified by prayer and fasting, the apostate would return to the place where he renounced Christianity, and, throwing down his turban before the *kadi* declare his return to Christianity. The Muslim judge generally used every means in his power to persuade the person to return to Islam, and allowed him several days to reconsider his decision. If, at the end of the grace period, the neo-martyr had still not changed his mind, he was usually beheaded or hanged in public.⁸⁰

Another category of neo-martyrs included those who only accidentally found themselves in situations where their faith was put to the test. The *Lexicon*, for example, mentions three anonymous Greeks

⁷⁷ Hasluck, *Christianity*, 452:n3.

⁷⁸ See L. Pavlovič, *Kultovi lišca kod Srba i Makedonatsi* [Saints among Serbs and Macedonians] (Belgrade, 1965).

⁷⁹ See Hasluck (*Christianity*, 453:n4, and 454) for examples of voluntary martyrs.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 456.

who posed as tax collectors by wearing Muslim clothes and using Muslim salutations. Taking the public display of Muslim symbols as an indication of actual conversion to Islam, they were tried by the court as apostates.⁸¹

In the literature of “coercive conversion,” neo-martyrdom has been described as an indication of “the burst of Muslim fanaticism during the accomplishment of the mass Islamization.”⁸² It is emphasized that the martyrs were pressured and even tortured to convert to Islam, and ultimately killed for refusing to do so. The fact that all neo-martyrs actually committed offences according to Islamic law, most often that of apostasy or blasphemy,⁸³ and that execution, as cruel as it may seem, was in accordance with the Islamic penal code, is usually disregarded.

Another explanation for the increase of neo-martyrs in the eighteenth century, in addition to the Church encouraging voluntary martyrdom, might have been the increasing number of new converts to Islam who felt dissatisfied with their new religion in this period. In a number of *fetva* collections of early eighteenth-century Ottoman *eyhülislâms*, for example, we find a chapter covering religious offences committed by new Muslims.⁸⁴ Most of the *fetvas* deal with new Muslims’ apostasy, but some refer to new Muslims continuing to show respect for Christian symbols, drinking wine or following Christian customs. That these *fetvas* reflected real life situations, not hypothetical cases imagined by Muslim jurists, cannot be disputed.⁸⁵ Therefore, having in mind Bulliet’s first axiom of conversion—that the convert’s expectations of his new religion will parallel his expectations of his previous

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 453.

⁸² H. Gandevev, Ts. Georgieva, P. Petrov, G. Neshev, “Islamati i asimilatorskata popitika na osmanskata vlast [Islam and the Policy of Assimilation of the Ottoman Authorities],” in *Istoria na Bulgaria*, 61 and 116. See also Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 187.

⁸³ According to Hasluck (*Christianity*, 453), “the neo-martyrs seem to have been men who “turned Turk” [i.e., to convert to Islam] for various motives, often in extreme youth or were alleged by the Turks to have done so.”

⁸⁴ See Ali Efendi, *Fetava-i Ali Efendi* (Istanbul, 1283), and Mente zade Abdurrahim Efendi, *Fetava-i Abdurrahim Efendi* (Istanbul, 1243). Ali Efendi was *eyhülislâm* in 1703–1712, and Abdurrahim Efendi in 1715–16. Selected *fetvas* of these jurists were published in *OIIPB*, 293–301.

⁸⁵ See Wael Hallaq, “From *Fatwâs* to *Furû*: Growth and Change in Islamic Substantive Law,” *Islamic Law and Society*, 1 (1994), 30–65, and *idem*, “Murder in Cordoba: Ijtihâd, Iftâ and the Evolution of Substantive Law in Medieval Islam,” *Acta Orientalia*, 55 (1994), 55–83.

one—the existence of *fetwas* indicating new Muslims' nostalgia for life in their previous community points to two possibilities: 1) that life in the Muslim community did not meet the expectations of the new converts, who began to appreciate all of a sudden the life they had left behind; and 2) that prior to the eighteenth century, the lifestyles of Muslims and Christians were more similar and reflected the syncretism prevailing in the religious life of the two communities,⁸⁶ however, by the beginning of the eighteenth century Muslim society had become increasingly conservative and syncretism was no longer tolerated.⁸⁷ The *fetwas* deal also with the validity of the conversion of minors, of conversion resulting from intoxication and deception, and, in only one instance, from violence (albeit not aimed at conversion).⁸⁸ All this may mean that people also increasingly contested and appealed conversions in doubtful circumstances. As punishment for these offences, the *fetwas* prescribe a number of penalties: application of the law of apostasy,⁸⁹ corporal punishment, renewing of the confession of faith and the marriage contract, and imprisonment. Usually, the apostasy of minors and females, and of males converted as a result of intoxication or deception, is treated more lightly. Only in cases of blasphemy do the *fetwas* prescribe the death penalty as the only alternative.⁹⁰

According to the scholars who support the "coercion theory," the severe punishments in these *fetwas* are major proof of the violent nature of the conversion to Islam by the Muslim "clergy" and the

⁸⁶ The numerous cases of religious syncretism in the Balkans are best documented in Hasluck, *Christianity*.

⁸⁷ The toleration of non-Muslim customs in previous times seems reflected in the following *fetwa*. Question: If several Muslims participate in dance festivities of unbelievers and Zeyd asks the *eyhülislâm* to issue a *fetwa* regarding their deeds and receives an answer: "renewal of the faith and marriage," and then Zeyd shows the *fetwa* to the Muslims in question saying "if you continue to do this, you would be required to renew your faith and marriage" but they answer: "Don't speak nonsense! We have seen these customs observed by our fathers and our grandfathers and we will continue to observe them," what should be done to such people according to the law? Answer: It is lawful that they be killed. See *Fetava-i Abdurrahim*, 97.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁸⁹ According to Islamic law, apostasy is punishable by death. In a new Muslim's case, however, the culprit is first imprisoned in order to give him time (maximum of three days for males) to understand the mistake. See *Shayb n 's Siyar*, 195, W. Heffening, *EP*, s.v. "Murtadd;" J. Kraemer, "Apostates, Rebels and Brigands," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 10 (1983), 34–48; and R. Peters and G.J.J. de Vries, "Apostasy in Islam," *Die Welt des Islams*, 17 (1976–77), 1–25.

⁹⁰ *Fetava-i Abdurrahim*, 99.

systematic efforts of Ottoman authorities to sever the connection of new Muslims with their former community.⁹¹ On the other hand, scholars who disagree with such conclusions point that the *fetvas* of the Ottoman *eyhülislâms* cover only instances of new Muslims' deviation from the norms prevailing in the Muslim community at the time, and have nothing to do with the decision of the new Muslims to join the community.⁹² Thus, the execution of the neo-martyrs was not a matter of religious overzealousness but simply one of upholding the law, which would have been applied in the case of Muslims as well.⁹³

Let me conclude this discussion of the phenomenon of neo-martyrdom by referring the reader to a document, dated 1550, from the court records of Sofia, which was published recently by R. Gradeva.⁹⁴ It describes in detail the events surrounding a case of apostasy from Islam, the reactions of the religious communities involved, the handling of the situation by the Ottoman authorities and lastly, the place of the *fetvas* in the legal procedures. Despite the involvement of high-profile Ottoman officials, which may be expected to put some bias to the case, it can still give us more reliable information than hagiographic literature. The document tells the following story.

The Jew Asrail from the city of Samokov converted to Islam and then renounced his new religion. Osman, the son of the *sipahi* Jafer Bey ibn Abdullah, had witnessed in court the conversion of Asrail to Islam. Then, in order to persuade the latter to return to the faith, Osman and some other Muslims threatened him with torture. Asrail

⁹¹ See for example, S. Dimitrov, "Some Aspects of Ethnic Development, Islamization and Assimilation in Bulgarian Lands in the 15th–16th Centuries," in *Aspects of the Development of the Bulgarian Nation* (Sofia, 1989), 40.

⁹² Radushev, "Rodopi," 51–53.

⁹³ Hasluck (*Christianity*, 454), for example, reports the case of a renegade monk, who in order to show his devotion to Islam went before the *kadi* and blasphemed Christ. He was beheaded at once. In another case, according to *Fetava-i Abdurrahim*, an *imam*, who stated that Easter is holier than the Muslim *bayram*, was punished by being obliged to renew of his confession of faith and marriage and by being relieved of his duties as *imam*. See *Fetava-i Abdurrahim*, 97.

⁹⁴ Rositsa Gradeva, "Kam vaprosa za religioznata atmosfera v Osmanskata imperia: Sofia v sredata na XVI vek [About the Question of the Religious Atmosphere in the Ottoman Empire: Sofia in the Middle of the 16th Century]" in B. Christova, ed., *Bulgarskiya shestnadeseti vek. Sbornik dokladi za bulgarskata obshta i kulturna istoriya prez XVI vek. Sofia, 17–20.X.1994* (Sofia, 1996), 149–186.

once again became Muslim but died twenty days later. His parents, Levi and Refeka petitioned the crown prince for justice.⁹⁵ The latter ordered the *kadı* of Samokov to seize 20,000 *akçes* from Osman and to give this to Levi and Refeka as blood-money (*diyet*). The money, however, turned out to be part of the *timar* revenue payable by Jafer Bey to the state treasury, and which had only been left with his son for safe keeping. Upon the return of Jafer Bey from military campaign and his learning of the events, he petitioned the sultan for wrongful confiscation of money and the case was reopened.

Levi and Refeka, who had meanwhile become residents of Sofia, were summoned to the *kadı* of Sofia. According to the court minutes, they denied that Asrail had ever been a Muslim, and that he had without any reason been tortured by some of the Muslim inhabitants of Samokov, as a result of which treatment he died. The crown prince, they stated, had ordered the Muslims of Samokov to give them the amount of 28,000 *akçes*⁹⁶ in order to prevent a rise in tensions between the Muslim and the Jewish communities. Although admitting the receipt of the money, they denied having received anything from Osman personally.

On his part, Jafer Bey presented signed eyewitnesses' accounts of Asrail's conversion, his apostasy and his second embracing of Islam, and of the seizure of the 20,000 *akçes* from his son. Jafer Bey also presented three *fetvas* issued by the *eyhülislâm*,⁹⁷ which clarified different aspects of the case. The *fetvas* are presented in the document in abstract form, known as secondary *fetvas*.⁹⁸ The first *fetva* clarifies the legal consequences of the cause of death. According to this *fetva*, if

⁹⁵ Most probably, the crown prince (*ehzade*) in question was the future Selim II (1566–74), who at the time was residing at Edirne. See Gradeva, "Religioznata atmosfera," 155–56.

⁹⁶ In addition to the blood-money award, Ottoman law prescribes the payment of a fine to the state. The so-called *kanunname* of Süleyman I prescribes a maximum fine of 400 *akçes* for murderers with incomes exceeding 1,000 *akçes*—see "Kanunname-i Al-i Osman," Mehmed Arif, ed., supplement of *TOEM* (1912), 4. However, a fine of 400 *akçes* might have been largely outdated, since the chapter on fines in this *kanunname* is identical to the chapter in the *kanunname* of Mehmed II, which is dated one century earlier. See H. nalçık, "Sulciman the Lawgiver and Ottoman Law." *AO*, 1 (1969), 118.

⁹⁷ According to Gradeva, that was most probably the famous Abusu ud (d. 1574), who held this post at the time. See Gradeva, "Religioznata atmosfera," 157–58.

⁹⁸ For the process of transformation of the primary *fetvas* into secondary *fetvas*, see Hallaq, "From *Fatwās* to *Furū*," 31–32 and 43–49; idem, "Murder in Cordoba," 67–74.

it is not proven in court that a person has died from the wounds inflicted by torture, the giving of blood-money is not required but only a punishment (*ta zîr*) for the unlawful torture. The second *fetva* clarifies some aspects of the legal status of an apostate from Islam. According to the latter document, a person who renounces Islam loses his virtuousness. If torture occurs when one is in this state the protection of Islamic law is lost. If such a person becomes Muslim again, the virtuousness is regained but not the protection, i.e., the case is similar to that of an apostate's execution. Thus, even if it is proven in such instances that a death is caused by torture, blood-money is not to be paid.⁹⁹ The third *fetva* pronounces on the issue of the legality of a claim for refund of blood-money. The legal opinion is that even if initially Muslims have paid blood-money in order to calm tensions, it is lawful to ask later for its refund. On the grounds of these legal opinions, the court ordered that Levi and Refeka return 20,000 *akçes* to Jafer Bey.

Although technically money and not religion was at the center of this legal dispute, Gradeva sees the document as just another indication of the religious fanaticism of Muslims of that time and the unfair treatment of non-Muslims by the Ottoman authorities. In my view, however, it only shows that, whatever the real story might have been, certain rules applied and were followed. The plaintiff, Jafer Bey, did not count on the religious fanaticism of the judge but on hard evidence (which eyewitnesses testimony counts as in an Islamic court) and on legal opinions covering every aspect of the case and issued by perhaps the foremost legal authority of the age. Moreover, the document makes it clear (the first *fetva*) that the torture of Asrail was adjudged as unlawful (*na-me ru*),¹⁰⁰ but was deemed punishable by *ta zîr*. The latter was a corporal punishment or a fine, imposed at the discretion of the *kadı*.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, since the legal process in question was not concerned with Osman's punishment, we do not know if any action in this respect was taken or not.¹⁰² If

⁹⁹ See also *Şayb n 's Sîyar*, 202–203.

¹⁰⁰ The feeling of wrongdoing on the part of the Muslim community of Samokov is attested by its initial easy agreement to pay such a large amount.

¹⁰¹ J. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford, 1964), 91. See also Uriel Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law* (Oxford, 1973).

¹⁰² The verdict, nevertheless, specifies that Levi and Refeka had to refund 20,000, i.e., they were allowed to keep the balance of 8,000 *akçes*.

we are to accuse Ottoman authorities of bias, that would be the possibility that financial interests of the state were put first, i.e., we may have never known what would have happened if the money paid by Jafer Bey's son had not been due to the treasury. However, to jump to the conclusion that non-Muslims were unfairly treated, solely on the basis of this document, seems to me speculative at best.

V. *Marriage and Concubinage as a Method of Conversion to Islam*

Whereas Christian marriage customs of the time required that both parties be Christian, Islamic law allowed mixed marriages in which the husband is Muslim. The wife in such cases is allowed to retain her faith. The opposite situation, however, i.e., Muslim woman and a non-Muslim husband was not permitted. Although the law did not obligate the wife to convert to Islam, this was often the result. The children born to such a marriage were inevitably raised as Muslims. Thus, it is often stated that intermarriage played a significant part in the conversion process in both the Asia Minor and the Balkans.¹⁰³ As to the nature of these marriages, most modern Balkan scholars depict them as involuntary and consider the phenomenon to have had the same disastrous consequences for the Balkan nations as the *dev irme* institution. According to Arnakis:

Down to the nineteenth century, the Turks and Islamized natives replenished their harems with as many attractive Christian women as inclination, fortune, and finances permitted. . . . As in the instance of the *devshirme*, the process of selection resulted in improving the human stock of the "master race" and depleting the biological resources of the Christian peoples. . . .¹⁰⁴

The truth, however, is that we do not know much about conversion resulting from intermarriages. Statements like the above only present this phenomenon through the prism of the antagonistic relations of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the last century

¹⁰³ See for example Vryonis, "The Byzantine Legacy and Ottoman Forms," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23–24 (Birmingham, 1969–70), 288; idem, "Christians," 203; Vera Mutafchieva, "Obrazat na turcite [The Image of the Turks]," in A. Zelyazkova, ed., *Vrazki na Savmestimost in Nesavmestimost mejdu hristiani i musulmani v Bulgria* (Sofia, 1994), 9 and Halil nalçık, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire," in idem, *Essays in Ottoman History* (Eren, 1998), 237.

¹⁰⁴ Arnakis, "Religion," 122–123.

of Ottoman rule. Some light on the subject is thrown by Maya Shatzmiller, who has surveyed the legal consequences of women's conversion for their family life.¹⁰⁵ According to Shatzmiller, there are two valid historical parameters of conversion in the case of women. One dimension is that women used conversion for their own gain, e.g., to pursue a romantic relationship or to benefit from the greater property rights afforded to Muslim women. On the other hand, many resisted conversion because of the heavy social price to be paid for it. According to the author, despite the importance of marriage in a woman's life, her blood ties were stronger. Thus, the severance of these ties, which was likely to follow conversion, might have been sufficient to wipe out whatever benefits were gained. Although Shatzmiller's study looks mainly at cases of post-marriage conversion by one of the spouses and relies heavily on the Cairo Geniza documents, which are relevant mostly to urban Jewish women, its conclusions may be seen as applicable to the Ottoman period as well.

In my opinion, in approaching the subject of women's conversion before or after intermarriage in Ottoman society, we should consider whether there were any factors that may have caused one or the other dimension to be dominant in a particular period. In rural society, for example, women's segregation was rarely achieved to the degree possible in urban centers and thus, cultural and even religious divisions might not have been sufficient to alienate a non-Muslim woman, married to a Muslim, from her blood family. Given this environment, many women might have been enticed into mixed marriages by the lure of the greater property rights guaranteed them by Islamic law and by the bride-price paid by the husband in Muslim marriages (in Christian and Jewish marriages it is the bride who must bring the dowry).¹⁰⁶ Another factor to be considered is the progress of conversion. The more advanced the stage of conversion in the society, the more socially acceptable the prospect of marriage to a Muslim and accompanying conversion to Islam. It may not be a coincidence that in the seventeenth century—the period of the most widespread Islamization in the Balkans—women used conversion as a means of obtaining a quick divorce and of acquiring cus-

¹⁰⁵ Maya Shatzmiller, "Marriage, Family, and the Faith: Women's Conversion to Islam," *Journal of Family History*, 3 (1996), 235–66.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 256 and Vryonis, "Christians," 203.

tody of their children.¹⁰⁷ It is also possible that the institution of concubinage, known as *kepin*, flourished in seventeenth-century Ottoman society because relations between Muslim men and non-Muslim women had become widely acceptable. *Kepin* was a contractual arrangement for a fixed period and for a fixed amount of money, which was paid to the father of the woman.¹⁰⁸ After the expiration of the contract, the woman could return to her community and remarry. The male children of such a union were raised as Muslims, while the girls were allowed to choose their faith.¹⁰⁹ Apparently, the practice was so widespread in the seventeenth century that the Orthodox patriarch petitioned the sultan to put a halt it.¹¹⁰

In view of the above considerations, I would argue that, given the present state of research, it is impossible to pronounce with any certainty on the extent of conversion as a result of intermarriage and concubinage. The following document, dated 1635, illustrates how controversial any conclusion could be.¹¹¹

The *zimmi* Dimo, resident of the village of Aliobasi, a former resident of the village of Dobromir, brought to the court the Muslim Osman, who is married to his daughter, Shemsa Hatun, and in his presence made the following complaint:

“The aforesaid Osman married my daughter, the aforesaid Shemsa, under compulsion (*cebran*). After he married her, he also compelled her to convert to Islam. I plead that she be called to appear before a court of law in order to establish the truth.”

When the aforesaid Shemsa was brought to the court of law and was asked to tell the truth she answered: “I became Muslim of my own free will and married the aforesaid Osman according to God’s command.”

The result of the lawsuit was registered in the court records. Written in the end of the month of Ramazan, 1044 (March 1635). Witnesses: Mehmed Efendi—the pride of the *hatibs*, Ahmed Chelebi—*imam*, Mehmed—*kazzaz*, Ahmed—*muhzir*, Ali—*muhzir*, Sefer—*muhzir*.

Since Shemsa claimed that she had voluntarily married Osman and converted to Islam the case was considered closed. On the one hand,

¹⁰⁷ See Molly Green, “Kandiye 1669–1720: The Formation of a Merchant Class” (Ph.D. dissertation: Princeton University, 1993).

¹⁰⁸ Vryonis, “Christians,” 203.

¹⁰⁹ Vryonis, “Byzantine Legacy,” 288.

¹¹⁰ See for details, N.J. Pantazopoulos, *Church and Law in the Balkan Peninsula during the Ottoman Rule* (Thessaloniki, 1967), 94–102.

¹¹¹ *TDIMN*, vol. 2 (Skopje, 1966), Document 261, 139–140.

based on her declaration, we can conclude that she may have married by mutual consent but contrary to her father's will, which would thus explain his outrage. On the other hand, if we consider the possibility that she may have been dishonored, in a traditional society the likelihood is that she would have been ostracized for life by her former community. Thus, in order to preserve some social standing she would accept the marriage with Osman as the only alternative. Such a motivation might explain Shemsa's declaration before the court, regardless of the actual events. In other words, in the absence of further details, the events surrounding this marriage and conversion to Islam and any in other similar cases can only be guessed at.

Factors of Conversion

We can generally distinguish between the factors of conversion as falling into three groups—economic, psychological-social and religious-cultural. As economic factors, I consider financial advantages that non-Muslim subjects may have had upon conversion to Islam. As psychological-social factors, I would include the desire to preserve a privileged position in society, or to advance in the social hierarchy, as well as the allure of locally-established Islamic institutions which strengthened the Muslim network in the society as a whole. As religious-cultural factors, I would count the impact of Bogomilism on Balkan Christianity, the interaction between Muslim and Balkan popular culture, and lastly the strength or the weakness of the Orthodox Church in the different Balkan regions.

I. Economic Factors

It was noted at the beginning of the chapter that, according to the "coercion theory," even seemingly voluntary conversion to Islam was viewed as having been motivated by economic pressure. According to Zelyazkova, the major factor in Islamization without direct coercion was the Ottoman fiscal system.¹¹² She states:

¹¹² Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 65.

In the area of the Empire's fiscal policy, the most significant impact on the Islamization of the local population was the poll-tax, which was paid by the non-Muslims.¹¹³

If we leave aside the subject of "voluntary or coercive" conversion, Zelyazkova's opinion seems to be shared also by nalçık, who states:

It can be safely said that increases and exactions of the poll-tax were fundamental reasons for the alienation of the Christian population from the Ottoman regime from the end of the sixteenth century on. The poll-tax was also responsible for mass conversions in various parts of the Balkans in later centuries.¹¹⁴

In other words, these two scholars hold that it was the economic advantages derived from the exemption from *cizye* that provided the economic motivation for Balkan non-Muslims to accept Islam. Such a conclusion seems at first to conform to the stages of the conversion process, outlined in the previous chapter. Until the end of the fifteenth century, the *cizye*, levied at the rate of 50 *akçes* per annum on average,¹¹⁵ was not a heavy burden and thus, not reason enough for conversion. Indeed, as I was able to show in chapter two, conversion in the fifteenth century was not extensive. Since the *cizye* was not a sufficient economic stimulus for abandoning the Christian faith, H. Lowry even believes that the Ottomans had to provide other economic incentives in order to "introduce a Muslim element into the newly conquered Christian territories."¹¹⁶ He has observed in a *timar* register, dated 1465, that the two Muslim households in the predominantly Christian village of Radilovo, Macedonia, were exempted from paying the tax known as *resm-i kulluk* or *resm-i çift*, which "was the single most important per-capita tax collected from the empire's agriculturists."¹¹⁷ To him, this fact implies that "the Ottomans were

¹¹³ Ibid., 67.

¹¹⁴ nalçık and Quataert, *History*, 69. See also nalçık, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire," 238.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 70; and E. Grozdanova, "Pogolivniyat danak i razvitiето na stokovo parichnite otosheniya v balgarskite zemi prez 15–19 vek [The Poll Tax and the Development of Money-commodity Relations in the Bulgarian lands in the 15th–19th Centuries]," in *Iz Istoriyata na Targoviyata v Balgarskite zemi 15–19 vek* (Sofia, 1978), 159.

¹¹⁶ Heath Lowry, "Changes in Fifteenth-Century Ottoman Peasant Taxation: The Case Study of Radilovo," in Anthony Bryer and Heath Lowry, ed., *Continuity and Change in Late Byzantine and Early Ottoman Society* (Birmingham, Washington, 1986), 30–31.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 30.

actively promoting Islam in this period by granting peasant converts certain economic incentives.”¹¹⁸ In my opinion, there are several considerations that point to the extraordinary nature of such an exemption. First, Lowry himself mentions the possibility that the tax exemption might have been extended in recognition of special services performed by these Muslim households. Second, *resm-i çift* continued to be paid by Muslim households in the surrounding villages. Lowry’s explanation that only first-generation Muslims were exempted is not convincing.¹¹⁹ Third, in 1478, the “exemption” was lifted from the village of Radilovo as well.¹²⁰ Furthermore, we have evidence for exactly the opposite process, i.e., that converts have been taxed at a greater rate than they were supposed to. In a fifteenth-century register for the region of Thessalonica, in the village of Vaslak, we find three households, clearly identified as converts (*mühtedi*), taxed at the rate of 25 *akçes*, instead of the 22 *akçes resm-i çift* as required for Muslims.¹²¹ The same situation can be observed in the case of the three new Muslim households in the village of Kumaniç and the one new Muslim household in the village of Ayo Nikola.¹²² Based on this evidence, Ménage has speculated that there might have been an intermediary status between being a *zimmi* and a full acceptance in the Muslim community.¹²³ Ménage points out that in all three

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹²¹ *TIBI*, vol. 8 (Sofia, 1966), 434.

¹²² Ibid., 442 and 452.

¹²³ V.L. Ménage, “On the Ottoman Word A riy n/A riy n,” *AO 1* (1969), 209. Ménage even believes that a special word may have existed to denote such status—a riy n—and that the situation is to be explained by “the Christians’ contempt for apostates and by the disdain of ‘old Muslims’ for peasant converts.” In the light of the discussion below about the nature of Christian and Muslim beliefs in the period, I am reluctant to accept this as a probable argument. Ménage’s etymology for trying to derive a riy n from the Medieval Greek *Agarenos* and Bulgarian *Agaryan* ‘Muslim’ is also not convincing. His assumption that an intermediary Bulgarian word *ahriyan* (“perhaps dialectical” in the words of Ménage) has existed is not supported by the author with any evidence. See also S. Dimitrov’s opinion about the connection of *ahriyan* with *agaryan* in “Nedoumici i greshki v edna kniga za bulgarite mohamedani [Baseless Arguments and Errors in a Book about the Bulgarian Muslims],” *Rhodopica* 1 (1998), 204. On the other hand, the suggested link between an ancient tribe Ahriyan (hence the Rhodope’s ancient name of Ahrida) and the Rhodope Pomaks, and thus, the connection between a riy n and ‘convert to Islam’ made by Evliya Çelebi at the time when the population of the region has largely adopted Islam, seems much more probable—see Ménage, op. cit., 205–206, and Dimitrov, “Errors,” 204.

cases the new Muslims have kept their Christian names while in other villages converts that have assumed Muslim names were taxed at the lower rate. A closer examination, however, also shows that the converts with Christian names are in villages with the rest of the inhabitants being all Christian and the converts with Muslim names in villages with the rest of the residents being all Muslim. In my opinion, first, such situation raises the question about the nature of conversion in this early period, and, second, it shows that Ottomans may have even tried to discourage conversion in villages where no prior conversions have occurred by continuing to treat converts and their former co-religionists in the same fiscal fashion, i.e. not to give an example of financial advantages upon conversion. On the other hand, in entirely Muslim villages such treatment is simply impossible.

In the course of the sixteenth century the *cizye* increased (to 80–85 *akçes*) and so did the pace of conversion. The biggest increase in *cizye* rates, however, occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the *cizye* was levied at 170 to 230 *akçes*; by the middle of the century, it was at 300–350 *akçes*; and by the end of the century, the rate stood at more than 400 *akçes*.¹²⁴ In addition to the *cizye*, non-Muslims were required to pay the salaries of the officials collecting it (*gulamiye*). The frequent cases of tax abuse contributed to financial pressure on the ordinary subjects of the Empire,¹²⁵ but especially on the Christians, who had in addition to pay ecclesiastical taxes to the Orthodox Church. It seems logical, then, that in order to lighten the tax burden many Christians would have preferred to convert to Islam, thereby relieving themselves of the obligation to pay the *cizye*. Indeed, as we observed in the previous chapter, the biggest increase in the rate of conversion seems to have occurred in the seventeenth century. Pointing to the *cizye* as the essential reason for conversion, however, poses some problems.

First, the *cizye* increase in the seventeenth century was indeed spectacular, but so was inflation. If we take the exchange rate of the *akçe* versus the Venetian ducat¹²⁶ as an indication of inflation, we see

¹²⁴ Grozdanova, "Pogolovniyat danak," 159–165.

¹²⁵ See H. nalçık, "The Ottoman Decline and Its Effects upon the *Reaya*," in H. Birnbaum, S. Vryonis, ed., *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change* (The Hague, 1972), 338–354.

¹²⁶ evket Pamuk, "Money in the Ottoman Empire 1326–1914," in nalçık and Quataert, *History*, 964.

that the rates of increase are almost parallel to those of the *cizye*. In 1584, one Venetian ducat was exchanged for 60 *akçes*. In 1600, the exchange rate was 125—a 108 percent increase. In the same period the *cizye* rose from 80 to 170 *akçes*—a 113 percent increase. By 1659 one Venetian ducat was exchanged for 190 *akçes* and by 1669 it was worth 250—increases of 217 and 317 percent respectively. The rate of *cizye* increase in the middle of the century was similar—300–350 *akçes*, i.e., increases of 275 and 338 percent. By the end of the century, the inflation rate had even outpaced the *cizye*. In 1691, one Venetian ducat was exchanged for 350 *akçes*, representing a 483 percent increase over the rates of a century before, while the *cizye* was levied at 400 *akçes*, a 400 percent increase over the same period. The *cizye* continued to rise in the eighteenth century as well.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, as pointed out in the previous chapter, the progress of conversion had halted by the second quarter of the eighteenth century in most of the Balkan lands.

Second, since the tax burden was equal for all non-Muslims, we may ask why conversion to Islam was more widespread in some regions and not in others. It could be argued that some regions experienced economic difficulties in a greater degree and thus, the tax increases only worsened these difficulties. While the connection between a poor local economy and Islamization appears to be valid for regions such as Nevrokop, how do we explain the spread of Islam in prosperous areas? For example, Kiel has surveyed the economic situation of the village of Kostandovo, in the region of Chepino, which was mentioned in connection with the alleged forced Islamization in the Rhodopes.¹²⁸ According to a register of 1570, the village had 113 households, 49 of them (43 percent) Muslim,¹²⁹ which indicates an advanced stage of the conversion process. In 1570, the residents of Kostandovo altogether paid 3,200 *akçes* in sheep tax. Based on the rate of one *akçe* for every two sheep, we can deduce that there were 6,400 sheep in the village, i.e., an average of 57 per household. In addition to the fact that such a number of sheep would be more than sufficient to sustain a family, Kiel calculates that with the price of sheep varying between 25 and 30 *akçes* at the time, the aver-

¹²⁷ H. nalçık, *EI*², s.v. “izya, ii, Ottoman,” 564.

¹²⁸ Kiel, “Spread of Islam,” 75.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

age household would possess 1,700–2,000 *akçes* worth of livestock. Moreover, the agricultural produce, which was collected in kind from the village, came to 25 *mudds* of wheat and 30 *mudds* of mixed cereals. Based on a tax rate of 10 percent and the standard *mudd* of 513.16 kg,¹³⁰ we can deduce that the average household produced approximately 2,500 kg of grain in that year. According to McGowan, who puts the subsistence level per person per annum at 230–275 kg of economic grain equivalent,¹³¹ the average household in Kostandovo might have had as much as a 50 percent surplus in agricultural production. Such a situation could hardly be interpreted as a motivating factor in conversion to Islam on economic grounds.

In other words, Dennett's conclusion as to the role of the *cizye* in the first century of Islam—that taxation alone could not be held responsible for Islamization—holds true for the Balkans as well. Obviously, there were other factors that contributed to the spread of Islam and that multiplied or eliminated the negative effects of the economic difficulties experienced by the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

Economic factors of a different nature may have played a role in the conversion of local urban craftsmen, who, as a rule, converted in the early stages of the process. As observed in chapter two, the major urban centers already possessed predominantly Muslim populations at the beginning of the sixteenth century while in the smaller towns the conversion process was as yet at its peak. In Thirkell's opinion, craftsmen converted as a result of a pressure generated through the market for their products and services. He believes that the military, civil and religious Muslim establishment, based as it was in the towns, preferred to purchase from suppliers who were of their own faith.¹³² Social factors, as the ones discussed below, however, most probably played a more important role for the conversion in urban centers.

¹³⁰ See "*Mudd*" in nalçık and Quataert, *History*, Appendix "Weights and Measures."

¹³¹ See Bruce McGowan, "Foodsupply and Taxation on the Middle Danube (1568–1579)," *AO*, 1 (1969), 155.

¹³² John Thirkell, "Islamisation in Macedonia as a Social Process," in Jennifer M. Scarce, ed., *Islam in the Balkans* (Edinburgh, 1979), 47.

II. *Social Factors*

It was primarily social factors that motivated the conversion of members of the local aristocracy, who were among the first to accept Islam in the Balkans. In Zelyazkova's opinion, the process of accommodation on the part of the Balkan elite started with the acceptance of Ottoman suzerainty, i.e., even before the conquest.¹³³ As vassals, the Balkan rulers often contributed troops to and even participated personally in Ottoman campaigns,¹³⁴ accounting for the early association between the Christian Balkan and Ottoman military elites. Upon the full annexation of the Balkan states, some of the nobility decided to convert to Islam in order to maintain their membership in the elite.¹³⁵

However, in the period immediately following the conquest the local aristocracy still converted in rather limited numbers. Conversion to Islam was not necessary for membership in the Ottoman military elite in the first century or so of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Thus, many of the Balkan Christian military offices who collaborated were accommodated by being granted *timars* or simply permitted to retain their former fiefs with the status of *sipahis*.¹³⁶ Due to the scarcity of sources, we do not know how many Christian *sipahis* participated in fourteenth century Ottoman campaigns. According to *timar* registers of the first half of the fifteenth century, however, the number of *timars* registered to Christian *sipahis* in the former lands of the Serb kingdom ranged from 50 percent in the subdistrict of Brani evo to 3,5 percent in that of Osvoja evo, in the *sancak* of Vidin.¹³⁷ In Bosnia in 1469, there were 111 Christian *sipahis* out of a total of 135.¹³⁸ In the *sancak* of Smederevo, the figure was 85 out of 149,¹³⁹ whereas, in the *sancak* of Arvanid, in 1432, 60 out of the 335 *timars* were granted to Christians.¹⁴⁰ The situation was similar in all Balkan territories with the exception of some parts of Greece where the for-

¹³³ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 163.

¹³⁴ See Kiel, *Art and Society*, 54.

¹³⁵ See for examples, Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 164.

¹³⁶ For the phenomenon of Christian *sipahis* see H. nalçık, "Od Stefana Du ana."

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹³⁸ Olga Zirojevi, "The Ottoman Military Organization in Yugoslav Countries in the 15th and the 16th Centuries," in *Ottoman Rule in Middle Europe*, 183.

¹³⁹ B. Djurdjev, "Hri ani Spahije u Severnoj Srbiji u XV veku," in *Godi njak Isterskog Dru tva Bosnia i Hercegovine*, 4 (1952), 165-169.

¹⁴⁰ nalçık, "Od Stefana Du ana," 40.

mer elite, being of Western European origin, had abandoned their holdings after the Ottoman conquest. That the Christian *sipahis* were either former military officers, having served in the armies of the Balkan rulers, or their sons, is indicated by the designation “old *sipahi*” attached to many of them.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, in the course of the fifteenth century, the number of Christian *sipahis* gradually diminished. That the reason for this process was conversion to Islam is again attested to in the *timar* registers. In the second half of the century, the number of new converts to Islam among the *sipahis* steadily increased. For example, in 1485, in the *sancak* of Shkodra, among the 170 *sipahis*, eight had recently accepted Islam.¹⁴² In the region of Akçahisar, in 1485 there were two new Muslim and five Christian *sipahis*. In the region of Debar in 1467, 8 percent of the *sipahis* were converts to Islam. In Tetovo, the number of *sipahis* who were new Muslims constituted 7 percent; in Skopje, 4 percent; and in Kichevo, 8.5 percent.¹⁴³ In the subdistrict of Prilep, the number of Christian *sipahis* diminished from 30 percent of the total in 1456 to 20 percent in 1467.¹⁴⁴ Well attested is the process of conversion among the *timar* holders in Macedonia as a whole. As of the middle of the fifteenth century, one third of the *timars* were in the hands of Christians. Twenty years later, only five Christian *timars* remained and at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the registers do not show any Christian *sipahis*.¹⁴⁵ According to Zelyazkova, by the end of the fifteenth century the conversion of the Balkan aristocracy had essentially been completed.¹⁴⁶ Kiel suggests a far later date. In a register of 1516 for the *sancak* of Kustendil he has found eight *timars* registered to Christian *sipahis*; however, this is a minuscule percentage of the total of 1052.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, Church inscriptions mention donations received from Christian *sipahis* as late as 1592, 1614 and 1633.¹⁴⁸

It is difficult to explain the conversion of the Christian *sipahis* on economic grounds. As part of the military class, they were exempt

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴² Pulaha, *Le cadastre de l'an 1485*, 5.

¹⁴³ Stojanovski and Sokolski, *Opshiren popisen defter*, 37–575.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Zirojevi, “Ottoman Military Organization,” 182–83.

¹⁴⁶ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 169.

¹⁴⁷ Kiel, *Art and Society*, 69.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

from all taxes, including the *cizye*. Thus, taxation privileges could hardly have been a motive for conversion in their case. Zelyazkova puts forward the theory that giving the Christian *sipahis* the smallest *timars* or increasing the latter's size upon the conversion of the holder indirectly stimulated them to convert to Islam.¹⁴⁹ Although she does not provide sufficient evidence to support such a thesis, with the Ottoman state firmly on the way to becoming a Muslim empire from the time of Mehmed II onwards, we may surmise that a certain degree of inequality existed between Christian and Muslim members of the Ottoman military elite. It was pointed out earlier that, from the time of Mehmed II, top government positions were given exclusively to the *dev irme*-raised elite. In the provincial governments, the influence of the *dev imes* must also have started to be felt. Metin Kunt has observed that in the sixteenth century the career backgrounds of new *sancakbeys* increasingly became that of the *dev irme*-educated at the expense of the provincial soldiery.¹⁵⁰ In other words, Christian *sipahis* must increasingly have found themselves limited in their career opportunities and might have seen conversion to Islam as the only alternative to changing that situation. In my opinion, the most convincing explanation for the conversion of the Christian military elite would be expressed by a rephrased version of Bulliet's second axiom of conversion—one may willingly convert from one religion to another if by virtue of the conversion one's social status can be preserved.

Additional pressure may have been exercised by the psychological factor of conformity. As a rule, no one likes to feel isolated from his natural social environment, which must have been the situation among the remaining Christian *sipahis* in the second half of the fifteenth century. An indication of this desire for social conformity is the fact that some Christian *sipahis* adopted Turkic names without changing their religion. Perhaps, they may have been trying to appeal to the still powerful Turkic warrior culture among their peers.¹⁵¹ As Kunt has put it, "Turcification was a sufficient degree

¹⁴⁹ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 166.

¹⁵⁰ . Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of the Ottoman Provincial Government 1550–1560* (New York, 1983), 64.

¹⁵¹ See nalçık, "Od Stefana Du ana," 29:n46, where he notes the mention in a *timar* register of a certain *kafir* Timurta (the unbeliever Timurta). That this is not a nickname becomes evident from further reference in the document to Timurta as *mezkur kafir* (the above-mentioned unbeliever)—*ibid.*, 43:n124.

of conversion; they did not feel they also should become Muslims”¹⁵² in order to identify themselves as belonging to the Ottoman military class. A similar development was observed by Sahillio lu with respect to non-Muslim tax-farmers in the second part of the 15th century.¹⁵³

The social and psychological factors that contributed to the conversion of Balkan nobility, however, were operative only within a very limited social stratum. The greater part of the non-Muslim population in the Ottoman Empire fell into the tax-paying class—the *reaya*. The phenomenon of common *reaya* conversions and their ambitions for social advancement has only recently attracted the attention of scholars.

It is a common assumption that Ottoman society was strictly defined, leaving no possibility of crossing the borders separating the classes. According to nalçık, the principle that “the son of a *reaya* is a *reaya*” was one of the state’s fundamental principles.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, some scholars observe that this principle was often ignored in practice and that the *reaya*-born found the path of upward mobility “open” or “closed” according to the short-term needs of the state. *Timars* consisting of uncultivated or abandoned land were occasionally granted to non-Muslim *reaya* in order to stimulate agricultural development.¹⁵⁵ The most certain path to social advancement for the *reaya*, however, was the *dev irme* institution. We have already pointed to the phenomenon of “private *dev irme*,” existing as early as the middle of the sixteenth century, and to voluntary conversion aimed at securing admission to the Janissary corps in the late seventeenth century. Hence, there can be no doubt that the desire to advance in society, to change one social class for another, was a prime consideration among the *reaya*, and that conversion to Islam was regarded as a prerequisite for this change.

¹⁵² Kunt, “Transformation of *Zımmi* into *Askeri*,” 60.

¹⁵³ See Sahillioğlu, “Slaves,” 124, where he cites a tax farmer—Andronikos, son of Kantakuzinos, using in addition to his Christian name, the name Mustafa as well, while his partner, the Jew abatay, used the name aban.

¹⁵⁴ nalçık, “Od Stefana Du ana,” 43.

¹⁵⁵ Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie*, 167.

III. *Religious-Cultural Factors*

In addition to the social and economic factors enumerated above, there were other factors behind conversion connected with the religious and cultural specifics of different regions in the Balkans.

1. *Similarities between Popular Christian and Muslim Religious Beliefs*

Vryonis has observed that the religious life of the non-Muslim masses in the Balkans “resided on a foundation heavily influenced by their pagan roots.”¹⁵⁶ Although most of the Balkan population had converted to Orthodox Christianity by the tenth century, that conversion had only been achieved by tolerating the integration of numerous pagan beliefs, superstitions and practices into the official dogma of the Church. Balkan Christians continued, therefore, to observe their traditional customs such as the use of marriage crowns, the participation of professional mourners during funerals, the placing of money in the grave, the preparation of a special funeral meal, the official observance of a one-year mourning period, etc. Many of the feast days in the Orthodox calendar were in fact only superficially Christian. In their essence, these feasts were connected with agrarian and pastoral life and thus, the old magical practices to ensure fertility persisted. According to Vryonis, the widespread hagiolatry and iconolatry originated also in the pagan past.¹⁵⁷ The former, consisting mainly in the veneration of local saints, had many of the characteristics of the ancient hero cult and polytheism. The icon, on the other hand, was associated no less with miracles and magic than were the pagan statues of the past.

A similar atmosphere of syncretism prevailed in the religious beliefs of the Muslim settlers in the Balkans as well. The conversion of the Oguz tribes from paganism to Islam had itself only started in the ninth century.¹⁵⁸ In other words, Islam had had even less time to put down roots among the Muslim conquerors than had Christianity among the Balkan population. According to Vryonis, the strength and persistence of nomadic life meant that Islam remained a superficial religious phenomenon among the Turkic tribesmen for a long time.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Vryonis, “Changes,” 154.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁵⁸ Harry Norris, *Islam in the Balkans* (Columbia, 1993), 86.

¹⁵⁹ Vryonis, “Changes,” 161.

With the gradual sedentarization of the nomads, pagan-shamanistic elements entered popular Islam. Christians, Armenians and Georgians who converted to Islam between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries in Asia Minor also contributed to the mix with additional layers of religious beliefs. Therefore, one might argue that some of the Muslim settlers in the Balkans were converts or descendents of converts from Asia Minor, many of whom had retained some features of their former religious life in their vision of Islam. In other words, the Muslim and Christian masses shared many common ways of apprehending religion, which stemmed from their not-too-distant pagan or former Christian past. All that was needed to bring the two strands of belief together was a motive for interaction and a medium of some sort to set this interaction in motion.

The interaction became inevitable with the Ottoman conquest. The medium appears to have been the “cult of saints” characteristic of the Islamic mystical orders (*tarikats*) combined with the local penchant for hagiolatry as its Christian counterpart.¹⁶⁰ Essentially, the *tarikats* effected the incorporation of comparable pagan and local non-Muslim beliefs into popular Islam, thus making the conversion process more palatable to the new Muslims. Their role in the Islamization of Asia Minor was briefly alluded to above in chapter one. In the Balkans as well, the participation of the orders in the spread of Islam was equally significant. The followers of the different *tarikats*—the dervishes—usually founded their *tekkes* and *zaviyes* around the grave of a pious person, who was soon proclaimed as a saint. The dervishes also often utilized the already existing local cult of a saint to promote a new one, whose miracles were made to resemble those of the superseded holy person.¹⁶¹ The creation of a common ritual site resulted in the gathering of people of both faiths on particular dates. The rituals performed, such as animal sacrifice (*kurban*) and offering gifts to the saint, were often similar.¹⁶² This natural intermingling made the popular beliefs and traditions of the local Christian and Muslim populations nearly interchangeable and the transition to Islam almost a seamless process.

¹⁶⁰ F. Babinger, “Der Islam in Südosteuropa,” in *Völker und Kulturen Südosteuropas, Schriften der Südosteuropa Gesellschaft* (Munich, 1959), 206–207.

¹⁶¹ The most famous saint common to both religions was Sarı Saltuk, who was revered in the Balkans, the Middle East and possibly as far as Sinkiang. See Norris, *Islam*, 146–160.

¹⁶² Vryonis, “Changes,” 174.

In the Balkans, one of the most popular dervish orders has long been the Bektashi order.¹⁶³ Besides being the official order of the Janissaries, it appealed strongly to the Christian population in the rural areas of Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Dobrudja.¹⁶⁴ For example, the Bektashi doctrine of a trinity consisting of God, Mohammed and Ali was similar to the Christian Trinity, while the belief in Ali and the Twelve Imams reminded the Christians of Jesus and the twelve Apostles. Furthermore, the Bektashi leaders (*babas*) acted as pastors, overseeing the important events in their communities such as marriages, funerals, births, etc. Another Christian practice adopted by the order was the confession of one's sins to the *baba*. The Bektashis used wine and *raki* (white brandy) in their sermons as well as during their gatherings—acts unequivocally forbidden by Islamic law. An important social aspect of the Bektashi order was the greater freedom it gave to women compared to more traditional Muslim society. According to A. Popovi,¹⁶⁵ the Bektashi order had made its impact felt early in the period of Ottoman rule. Later, other Sufi orders, e.g., the Mevlevi, Qadari, Halvati, Nak bendi and Rifai brotherhoods, also gained followers in the Balkans.

The evidence of religious syncretism involving Balkan Christianity and Islam is overwhelming. For example, Vakarelski observes the survival among the Pomaks in the Rhodopes of old magical practices associated with harvesting and sowing, and of the Kukeri dances—associated with Dionysian fertility rites.¹⁶⁶ Many converts in Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia continued to observe Easter by dyeing eggs, sought the blessing of a priest on feast days, kept church books and icons in their houses and continued to perform animal sacrifices in the yards of certain churches and monasteries. In Albania, visits to churches and the baptism of Muslim children were common practices.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ See for the most detailed account J. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London, 1937).

¹⁶⁴ See Norris, *Islam*, 89–100.

¹⁶⁵ A. Popovi, “Les ordres mystiques musulmans du Sud-Est européen dans la période post-ottomane,” in A. Popovi and G. Veinstein, ed., *Les ordres mystiques dans l’Islam* (Paris, 1986), 66.

¹⁶⁶ Christo Vakarelski, “Altertümliche Elemente in Lebensweise und Kultur der bulgarischen Mohammedaner,” *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie*, 4 (1966), 149–172.

¹⁶⁷ Vryonis, “Changes,” 175–76 and Norris, *Islam*, 48. Examples of Crypto-Christianity can be found in Hasluck, *Christianity*. With respect to Crypto-Christianity

According to Vryonis, women, through large-scale intermarriage, were another vehicle by which popular Christianity and Islam intermingled. Well-known examples include Sheik Bedreddin Simavi, whose lineage shows an extensive history of intermarriages and religious syncretism,¹⁶⁸ and Balm Sultan, perhaps the real founder of the Bektashi order, who is also said to have been the offspring of a mixed marriage.¹⁶⁹

Because of the syncretism of popular beliefs, it can be concluded that the process of conversion, at least until the end of the sixteenth century, probably did not involve a radical break from the convert's previous religious beliefs or lifestyle. According to Adem Hand i , for a long time the act of conversion to Islam consisted only of adopting a Muslim name, and therefore represented more an acceptance of Ottoman rule than the actual adoption of a foreign religion.¹⁷⁰

2. *The Bogomil Heresy*

What contributed also to the shaping of popular religious culture in some regions of the Balkans and at the same time made conversion to Islam easier, were certain heretical movements. Among the latter, perhaps the most influential was the Bogomil heresy, named after a certain priest of the same name. Bogomilism emerged in tenth-century Macedonia,¹⁷¹ i.e., shortly after the conversion of the Slavic population to Christianity, and then spread throughout the peninsula. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw Bogomilism at the height of its popularity. An adaptation of dualistic Paulician and Manichean beliefs with a distinctive Slavic flavor,¹⁷² its cosmology denied the dogma of the unity of God and rejected the incarnation of Christ as well as the sanctity of His Mother, and for that matter the whole Orthodox tradition. According to Obolensky, "Bogomilism

among Albanians see also Peter Bartle, "Kripto-Christentum und Formen des religiösen Synkretismus in Albanien," in *Grazer und Münchener Balkanologische Studien* (Munich, 1967), 117–127.

¹⁶⁸ Vryonis, "Changes," 173:n44.

¹⁶⁹ Birge, *Bektashi*, 56.

¹⁷⁰ Adem Hand i , "Islamizaciji," 48.

¹⁷¹ D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils. A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948), 167.

¹⁷² There were several features of Bogomilism that cannot be explained by outside influence and that were most probably original. See Obolensky, *Bogomils*, 138.

can scarcely even be called a heresy in the strict sense of the word; for it represented, not a deviation from Orthodoxy on certain particular points of ethics, but a wholesale denial of the Church as such."¹⁷³ Bogomilism rejected the official Church institution with all its characteristics—priesthood, formal places of worship, liturgy, rituals such as baptism, communion, and confession, and even symbols such as crosses and icons. Thus, Bogomilism had two aspects: a doctrinal—its dualistic cosmology—and an ethical—a desire to reform the Church and to return to the purity and simplicity of the apostolic age. True Christianity, according to the Bogomils, could only be found in their community and hence they claimed the exclusive right to call themselves Christian.¹⁷⁴

Both aspects of the sect seem to have been important factors in the process of conversion to Islam. The influence of Middle Eastern beliefs on Bogomil doctrine may have further contributed to the religious syncretism in the Balkans. Manichaeism, in particular, is said to have influenced the general development of the Islamic mystical orders as well.¹⁷⁵ We may recall also Bulliet's observation that Zoroastrian Iran converted to Islam significantly faster than the Christianized areas of the Middle East and Africa. In my opinion, one can easily draw an analogy between Zoroastrian Iran and the Bogomil communities in the Balkans.

The ethical aspect of Bogomilism facilitated conversion to Islam even more decisively. In areas where the movement had gained the greatest ground, the formal structure of the Orthodox Church was next to non-existent. As Kiel has put it—"there was simply no need for numerous Orthodox churches."¹⁷⁶ Thus, no organized ecclesiastical opposition to the spread of Islam could be offered.

The effects of Bogomilism seem to have been most pronounced in Bosnia. M. Oki , on the evidence of early Ottoman registers, believed that the majority of the Bosnian population was composed of Bogomil adherents and that their mass conversion took place within a few years of the conquest.¹⁷⁷ Adem Hand i , on the other

¹⁷³ Obolensky, *Bogomils*, 140.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁷⁵ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, 1975), 34.

¹⁷⁶ Kiel, *Art and Society*, 298.

¹⁷⁷ M. Oki , "Les Kristians (Bogomiles Parfaits) de Bosnie d'après les documents Turks inédits," *Südost-Forschungen*, 19 (1960), 108-133. The Ottoman sources point

hand, has shown that the process of conversion only started twenty years after the conquest.¹⁷⁸ Although conversion had progressed significantly faster there than in any other Balkan region, by the middle of the sixteenth century only 40 percent of the population of Bosnia was Muslim. Hand i has also argued that by the time of the Ottoman conquest, the Bogomils had essentially been exterminated in Bosnia.¹⁷⁹ Despite doubting the Bogomil origins of the Bosnian Church, John Fine has concluded that conversion to Islam was extensive because no Christian Church in Bosnia had been able to establish an efficient territorial-based organization that could attract and hold believers.¹⁸⁰ This conclusion seems to be confirmed by exceptions to this rule, such as the fact that in the subdistrict of Srebrenica, where a Franciscan monastery had put down firm local roots, Muslims constituted only 16 percent of the population in 1533.¹⁸¹

Whereas the debate about the connection between Bogomilism and conversion to Islam in Bosnia has reached a considerable degree of sophistication, it is only recently that scholars have begun pointing to such a connection in other Balkan regions. According to Kiel, one third to one half of the population of early Ottoman Bulgaria may have had Bogomil inclinations or have been at least indifferent to the official church. The result was an underdeveloped parish network, a much weaker ecclesiastical superstructure and a much lower degree of spiritual care for the local communities than in Serbian or Greek lands.¹⁸²

The hold of Bogomilism on the populations of Macedonia and the Rhodopes and hence, its influence on conversion to Islam in these regions has been even less studied. The relevant evidence has

to the existence of over a hundred households of “perfect” Bogomils registered as “*kristian*,” as opposed to the usual “*gebran*” or “*kafir*” (unbeliever).

¹⁷⁸ Hand i, “Islamizaciji,” 46.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ John V.A. Fine, Jr., *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation* (New York, 1975), 386. See for a detailed review of the scholarly debate about the character of the Bosnian church Fikret Adanır, “The Formation of a ‘Muslim’ Nation in Bosnia-Herzegovina: a Historiographical Discussion,” in Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, ed., *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden, 2002), 267–304.

¹⁸¹ This is contrary to the opinion that it was mainly former Catholic and Orthodox Christians who first converted—see Adanır, “Formation,” 290, who follows in that argument Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia. A Short History* (London, 1994).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

thus far been taken exclusively from ethnographic studies. For example, the name *torbeshi*, which also served to designate the Bogomils, is still applied to the Pomaks in the Rhodopes and to the Muslims in Macedonia in the subdistricts of Debar, Skopje, Kiçevo and the Shar Mountain.¹⁸³ It may be recalled that, compared to the other Macedonian subdistricts, the highest percentage of converts to Islam in the middle of the sixteenth century was registered in the rural areas of the subdistrict of Debar.¹⁸⁴

Summary

In conclusion, I argue that there can be no single explanation for the Islamization of the Balkan population. It was more than likely a combination of several factors that played a role in the conversion of a particular region. The more factors involved, in fact, the faster the pace of conversion. Nevertheless, some of the factors and forms of conversion were more pronounced in particular periods than in others. The connection between the stages and factors of conversion could be summarized as follows:

1. In the course of the fifteenth century, conversion was minimal. It mainly affected the former Balkan military elite, who saw in conversion a way of preserving its privileged position in society. Most of the Balkan population saw its standard of living rise in this period, and thus, conversion, if chosen, represented acceptance of Ottoman rule rather than recognition of the superiority of Islamic religion or else coercion. The latter factor was only pronounced in the case of boys collected through the *devirme*.
2. In the sixteenth century, conversion to Islam became a more widespread phenomenon. Members of the urban population, such as craftsmen, converted in large numbers because of market pressure and greater exposure to the Muslim settlers' way of life. Conversion among the rural population picked up only in the later part of the century as a result of a combination of factors,

¹⁸³ Obolensky, *Bogomils*, 167. See also Sokoloski, "Islamizacija," 86.

¹⁸⁴ See chapter two, graph 1.

such as worsening of economic conditions, religious syncretism and past heretical influences. The *dev irme* institution was furthermore no longer associated with forced conversion once the population realized the advantages that the institution offered to the boys collected, as well as to their families.

3. It is the seventeenth century, when the rural population began to embrace Islam extensively, that may be deemed as the Balkan "age of conversions." Islamization, nevertheless, was a gradual process rather than a short-term phenomenon. Factors operating during this period included continuing economic difficulties as well as the inability on the part of the Orthodox Church to offer spiritual guidance in regions with a past affiliation to Bogomilism. The immense prestige of the *dev irme* cadres, on the one hand, and the abrogation of the levies in the later part of the century, on the other, encouraged the common people to look at voluntary conversion as a prerequisite to membership in the military or paramilitary corps.

CHAPTER FOUR

KISVE BAHASI PETITIONS AS SOURCES OF CONVERSION

Kisve Bahası Petitions—Personal Documents or a Chancery Stereotype?

In my opinion, *kisve bahası* petitions are the most significant documentary source regarding conversion to Islam in the last quarter of the seventeenth and the first quarter of the eighteenth centuries. In contrast to the information provided by tax-registers, which is open to interpretation as to the nature and motives of conversion, in the instance of petitions we have direct statements by the converts pointing to their voluntary conversion.

Realizing the potential dangers posed by these sources to the theory of coercive conversion to Islam, Bulgarian scholarship had sought to depersonalize their content or dismiss it outright as of dubious nature.¹ The “illusion,” by which the petitions were made to resemble personal applications by non-Muslims for acceptance into the Islamic faith, was attributed by them to the administrative methods of the Ottoman chancery that “enveloped the destinies of countless people who for various reasons severed their links with the Christian faith”² or, in other words, to the chancery style. It is emphasized that the function of the petitions was to start a financial correspondence accounting for the expenses incurred by the treasury for the converts. Therefore, the *kisve bahası* petitions are not to be regarded as personal documents, but rather as a product of the Ottoman chancery, written by skillful scribes.³ Another “decisive” argument used by Bulgarian scholars is that, if there were no Ottoman “aggressors” in the Balkans, conducting religious, economic and political discrimination against the Christian population, there would never

¹ Mutafchieva, “Image,” 9.

² Velkov and Radushev, “Documents,” 63.

³ S. Dimitrov, “Avant-propos,” 34.

have been any Islamization.⁴ Thus, the possibility that the petitions were voluntary is a priori “excluded.”⁵

Although I agree in principle with the conclusion that, as a rule, the documents were not written personally by the converts, it does not, nevertheless, diminish the value of the documents as a source of personal information. The scribes were not required to write down any personal details and indeed, in many petitions no such information is provided. However, very often the petitions reflect closely (and sometimes in great detail) the motives of conversion of each individual. Therefore, in those documents where we do find personal details, these can only have been included at the request of the individual. Simply, the scribes put the words of the converts in a formal language. In my opinion, a detailed diplomatic analysis of the petitions’ formulary and structure would give us a better understanding of the nature of these sources and of the types of data relevant to the process of conversion.

Diplomatic and Structural Characteristics of Kisve Bahası Petitions

In terms of their diplomatic and paleographic characteristics, the *kisve bahası* petitions belong to the Ottoman chancery genre of *arz-i hal*, also known as *ruk a* or *istida a*.⁶ It is generally agreed that these terms designated written complaints or petitions of individuals.⁷ However, because the chancery practices of the age often mixed up names of similar documents (*arz*, *ariza* and *arz-i hal* in this case), it is not easy to determine what kind of petition the *arz-i hal* actually constitutes: a petition by lower rank officeholders only, a petition by *reaya* only or a petition submitted by a variety of individuals. Velkov defines

⁴ Velkov and Radushev, “Documents,” 63.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ A. Velkov, *Vidove Osmanoturski Dokumenti: Prinos kam Osmanoturskata Diplomatika* [Types of Ottoman-Turkish Documents: A Contribution to Ottoman-Turkish Diplomatics] (Sofia, 1986), 19.

⁷ See S. Faroqhi, “Die Vorlagen (telhise) des Großwesirs Sinân Pa a an Sultan Murâd,” (Diss. zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Hamburg, 1967), 20, H. nalçık, “Sikâyet hakkı: arz-i hal ve arz-i mahzar lar,” *OA*, 7–8 (1988), P. Fodor, “The Grand Vizieral Telhis: a Study in the Ottoman Central Administration 1566–1656,” *AO*, 15 (1997), 141 and Velkov, *Vidove*, 19.

the *arz* as a report made by lower-ranking bureaucrats or departments on an official matter and the *arz-i hal* as a petition on the part of an individual to someone occupying one of the state offices on a private matter.⁸ nalçık believes that although all people can submit *arz-i hal*, those from the *askeri* class preferred to use the term *arz*.⁹ In petitions of new Muslims, I have observed the petitioners to be from both the *reaya* and *askeri* classes, with the former constituting the majority.¹⁰ Therefore, I support P. Fodor's position¹¹ that *arz-i hal* was the general term used most often for petitions from all strata of society.

Although a large number of *arz-i hals* have been preserved until today in archives, they have not been much exploited by scholars as sources of Ottoman history,¹² nor have their form and structure been properly analyzed.¹³ The following review of *kisve bahası* petitions aims to provide a solid empirical basis, but it may also be read as an attempt at defining the specific diplomatic features of *arz-i hals* in general.¹⁴

According to Ottoman diplomatics, all documents share the following basic structure: introductory protocol; content; and final or closing protocol.¹⁵ Furthermore, each of these divisions is subdivided into a number of subsections whose order was rigidly adhered to:

⁸ Velkov, *Vidove*, 15.

⁹ nalçık, "Sikâyet," 35.

¹⁰ Some of the petitions of new Muslims were written *post factum*, i.e., after the petitioners had been converted and admitted into the military corps; thus, they no longer belonged to the *reaya* at the time of the petition's writing. Examples of *arz-i hals* written by high ranking members of the military are cited also by Pal Fodor, "Telhis," 141:n20.

¹¹ P. Fodor, "Telhis," 141.

¹² A notable exception is the publication of *arz-i hals* collected in the "Ottoman books of complaints" by H.G. Majer (H.G. Majer, *Das Osmanische "Registerbuch der Beschwerden" (ikâyât defteri) vom Jahre 1675*, vol. 1. (Vienna, 1984). See Haim Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (Albany, 1994), 154–173 for statistical utilization of the *arz-i hals* contained in the former publication.

¹³ Although the title of nalçık's article "Sikâyet hakkı: arz-i hal ve arz-i mahzarlar" suggests that some attention is given to the *arz-i hals* there, it is the *arz-i mahzarlar* (collective petitions) that the author focuses on.

¹⁴ Some basic features of the *arz-i hal* are outlined in Nedkov, *Osmanoturkska Diplomatika i Paleografija* [Ottoman-Turkish Diplomats and Paleography], vol. 1 (Sofia, 1966), 146–150, in the section discussing the *ariza* and in Fodor, "Telhis," 141–144, the latter surveying the *telhis*.

¹⁵ See: Nedkov, *Diplomatika*, 127; J. Reychman, A. Zajaczkovski, *Handbook of Ottoman-Turkish Diplomats* (Oxford, 1968), 140.

1. Introductory Protocol
 - a.) Invocation (*davet*)
 - b.) Imperial cipher (*tu ra*)
 - c.) Intitulation (*unvan*)
 - d.) Salutation (*elkab*)
 - e.) Benediction (*du a*)

2. Content of document (exposition)
 - a.) Narration and Disposition (*nakl*)
 - b.) Sanction and Corroboration (*tehdit*)

3. Final Protocol
 - a.) Date (*tarih*)
 - b.) Place of writing (*mekan*)
 - c.) Signature (*imza*) or Seal (*mühür*)

It should be pointed out that, in keeping with the hierarchical nature of Ottoman documents, it is only in the documents issued by the sultan's chancery that all these elements can be found. In documents written by individuals of lesser importance, as in the case of new Muslims, the structure is found to be much more basic and the formulas shorter and simpler.

The "Database Management System" Method of Analysis

Analyzing the petitions against the above-outlined pattern, however, imposes certain limitations upon the study and, consequently, upon the understanding of the documents. The main disadvantage of applying this traditional schema to any genre of Ottoman documents is the fact that it emphasizes the normative elements of the composition, i.e., those included in the protocol, while almost ignoring the exposition as something unanalyzable because of its variable character.¹⁶ Thus, the information at the heart of each document is left to historiographical analysis, which in its turn takes little, if any,

¹⁶ See for example the analysis of sultanic documents in Reychman and Zajackovski, *Handbook*, 146, where less than half a page is devoted to the exposition while its content is summarized by the phrase "information explaining the reasons for the issuance of the document."

notice of the diplomatic features of a document. In other words, when it comes to the exposition, Ottoman diplomatics treats the form of this section of the document in isolation from its contents, even to the extent of ignoring the latter altogether. Such an approach may be sufficient for general studies of Ottoman diplomatics, where the document's contents are immaterial, but it is not appropriate for research in which the exposition's variability is what matters most. This being the case, how do we make the exposition's variable content part of the structural analysis of documents?

If, in the context of Ottoman chancery practice, a document is divisible into protocol and exposition, and if it is the former that qualifies the document as part of this practice, then it is the latter that determines the genre of the document. Hence, in order to analyze the exposition of a document, we have to consider it in the light of others belonging to the same genre only, i.e., to pool all available expositions in a database. Furthermore, although each exposition is unique, considered as a group within the genre they will show a set of similarities in composition and content, and thus are susceptible to generalization. A mechanical description of their common features, however, would still not be much different from the traditional diplomatics approach. I would prefer instead to use a method that allows me to analyze the exposition of the petitions as a synthesis of form and substance, i.e., to combine structural and historiographical analysis. In this respect, we can benefit from a methodology developed in another discipline that deals with the notions "database" and "structural similarities," namely, computer science, where a very elaborate theory for creating *database management systems* exists.

A *database management system* in computer science refers to the combination of stored data and a set of programs that allows users to access and modify the data.¹⁷ What is important to the present task is the basic concept that data is processed through the medium of a superstructure, which represents the overall logical structure of the database. Subsequently, each inquiry into the database is directed and greatly facilitated by the superstructure. In other words, creating a logical superstructure of expositions designed to facilitate his-

¹⁷ See Abraham Silberschatz, Henry F. Korth and S. Sudarshah, *Database System Concepts*, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1999), 4.

torigraphical inquiry will allow me to achieve my goal of integrating diplomatic and historical analysis.

To define the proper superstructure of the database of expositions I will borrow another concept used in *database systems* theory, namely, the *entity-relationship* data model. This model is based on the perception of a real world that consists of a collection of *entities*, and of *relationships* among these *entities*.¹⁸ An entity is a “thing” or “object” that is distinguishable from other things, and definable by a set of attributes. A *relationship* is an association that links together several entities. The *entity-relationship* data model is a semantic data model, i.e., it attempts to represent the meaning of the data and then to map it in a conceptual schema.¹⁹

Since, in our case, we are dealing with texts, the collection of entities cannot be other than a collection of semantic entities. Indeed, there are sections in the expositions of new Muslims’ petitions that feature similar semantic content. Moreover, these semantic entities are arranged in a specific order in the text. Thus, they form relationships expressed by logical and grammatical links. In other words, we have all the necessary elements to apply the *entity-relationship* model to the analysis of the expositions of new Muslims’ petitions and to design a database schema following that model.

In practical terms, the construction of a *database systems* model will be accomplished in two stages, each representing a different level of abstraction. At the first level of abstraction, the *physical level*, complex, low-level data structures (semantic segments and the words, phrases, and formulas of which they are constituted) are identified and described in detail. This is the level of the traditional diplomatic analysis of documents. By identifying these structures in our petitions and studying their interrelation we are actually channeling variable text into patterns of expression, a process which at the next and higher level of abstraction, the *logical level*, provides for the schematic representation of the low level data-structure. Here, the entire database is described in terms of a small number of *entity-symbols* and *relationship-symbols*. Because of the relative simplicity of the composition at this level, the overall logical structure of the database can be expressed graphically by an *entity-relationship* diagram. This diagram

¹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹ Ibid.

is the abstract view of the database and represents the superstructure of the chancery genre of “new Muslims’ petitions.”²⁰ The superstructure is in a sense independent of the database of expositions because it is immutable. Each exposition is an individual instance of this superstructure. Thus, the existence of another instance does not change the superstructure; it only validates it.

In my method of analysis, the superstructure corresponds to the role of a computer program’s interface in accessing information from a database. The interface is the visual medium through which a user interacts with the database. It provides the user with different views of the database, and enables him/her to retrieve data selectively and efficiently.

A similar function is achieved in the traditional method of analysis whereby documents are classified into groups according to a common feature. The disadvantage of classification, however, is that it means physically dividing the database. This may provide some sets of data but when an individual piece of data conforms to two or more criteria of selection, it is difficult to decide how to classify it. Even if we decide to put the data into a certain class, this automatically makes it unavailable to the other classes in which the data qualifies for inclusion. Moreover, if we decide to include the data in all classes that it qualifies for, we create, in fact, out of one, several databases. The advantage of the database method of analysis is that inquiries into the data are controlled by the devised superstructure, with each entity-symbol or relationship-symbol commanding a class of data while at the same time making this data available to another entity-symbol or relationship-symbol by way of the links in the superstructure. Although the structural analysis is completed by the creation of a database superstructure, there is another level of abstraction of data that follows in my method, the *view level*. This is the point where the synthesis between form and substance occurs. At this level only part of the database is described, using the superstructure as a tool for directing inquiries. In other words, the view level is essential for historiographical analysis because the data is now selected and analyzed according to its relation to the other sets of data.

²⁰ Such an approach could be utilized for other kinds of Ottoman documents as well. See A. Minkov, “The Peasants’ Deed (*Tapu*) in the Ottoman Empire” (MA Thesis: Sofia University, 1991).

A. *Physical Level*

Having described the purpose and features of my method, I will proceed with the analysis itself, starting with the physical level of description. To provide a comprehensive view of the documents' composition, the description will also focus on the normative elements of the introductory protocol, according to the traditional method of Ottoman diplomatics.

I. *Introductory Protocol*

1. Invocation

The introductory protocol of *kisve bahası* petitions traditionally begins with the invocation “*hüve*” (Ar. *huwa*, “He”), implying “God,” which is placed at the very top of the document. It represents the basic form of the much longer variations found in other kinds of Ottoman documents.²¹ Because of its frequent use, in most cases the “*hüve*” appears as little more than a graphic symbol. Its absence, however, can be noted in a small number of petitions.²²

The first three elements typically found in documents issued by higher administrative offices—sultan's *tu ra*, intitulation, and inscription—are not features of the petitions. The body of the text begins from about the middle of the document, as a significant portion of the upper half (with “*hüve*” at the top) and the right margin was normally left blank.

2. Salutation

The actual text of the petitions begins with a salutation addressed to the sultan. The salutation was intended to manifest respect to the sultan, and to acknowledge his grandeur and eminence. The usual salutation formulas encountered are:

Devletli ve saadetli sultanım hazretleri . . . (Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Prosperous Sultan), or

Devletli ve merhametli sultanım hazretleri . . . (Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Merciful Sultan).

²¹ Boris Nedkov, *Diplomatika*, 127–129; Reychman and Zajaczkovski, *Handbook*, 140–141.

²² See for example 1\3565; 1\10820; 1\10923, f. 1; 1\11056; 1A\57290, f. 1; NPTA XX 1\28, f. 2; OAK 76\52, f. 39.

It should be noted that “*sultanım*” can be used as a mark of respect, even if the person being addressed is not the sultan.²³ In cases, however, where *padi ah/padi ahım* are used instead, the fact that the petition is addressed to the sultan is unambiguous:

eketlii, mahabetlii, inayetlii padi ah, zill-i allah, hazretlerinin . . .
(Your Majesty, Noble, Magnificent Padishah, Shadow of God [on Earth]).²⁴

It was even customary for the words “*sultan*” and “*padishah*” to be written above the line in the salutation so that they would stand out in the text.

2.1. *Benediction.* As a rule, the salutation ends with a benediction formula. The latter consists most often of the phrase *sa olsun* (be healthy). However, occasionally, we find more elaborate versions, e.g.:

. . . hakk subhane ve taala mubarek vucud-i humayünların, hatalardan masun ve mahfuz ediüp sayıne merhametlerin beni adam üzerlerinde dürü zail eylemeye. Amin.
(May God, whose lauds I recite and Who is to be extolled, guard and save Your Blessed Imperial Body from errors and never put an end to the reign of Your Noble Mercy over mankind. Amen.),²⁵ or

. . . hakk-ı subhane ve taala hazretleri, vucud-i humayünların hatasız eyleyüp serir-i sultanında pır-i kamil eyleye emin-i ba rabb el-alamın (May God, whose lauds I recite and Who is to be extolled, preserves from error your Imperial Reign. May you be the perfect spiritual leader on the Imperial throne, the trustee [on Earth] of the Lord of the Worlds).²⁶

3. Genre specification

In many *kisve bahası* petitions, as in petitions in general,²⁷ we find a sentence between the introductory protocol and exposition, which specifies the genre of the document, e.g.:

Arz-i hal-ı bendeleri budur ki (The petition of your servant is as follows).²⁸

More often, however, the exposition follows the introductory elements while the document’s genre is specified in the middle of the

²³ See below, for

²⁴ 1A\57265.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ 1\11107.

²⁷ See Nedkov, *Diplomatika*, 148.

²⁸ 1\11106; 1A\57265; 1A\57290.

exposition, immediately before the petitioner's request (see II, 4.1 below).

II. *Exposition*

1. Identification of the petitioner

The exposition usually begins with the identification of the petitioner. This element also serves as the grammatical subject of the exposition.

1.1. *Formula of submission to the sultan.* Instead of referring to himself by name, the petitioner would usually identify himself by an impersonal term such as *bu kulları* (this humble slave/servant of yours), or in the case of a woman, *bu cariye(ni)z*. Occasionally, the word “*fakir*” (poor, insignificant) replaces “*kul*.” These formulas were mandatory in Ottoman documents addressing the sultan, regardless of the social standing or religion of the person initiating it.

1.2. *Gender.* The gender of the petitioner is always made clear because of the difference in the formulas of submission used for males and females.

1.3. *Age.* Distinction in the age of the petitioner is made only between adults and adolescents by the use of the word “*sa ir*” (small, little) in cases where the petition is made in the name of a boy or girl. Occasionally, the petitioner is identified as a young boy with the words “*o ul*” or “*o lan*” (boy, lad).²⁹

1.4. *Religious affiliation.* Often, the identification of the petitioner emphasizes that the latter is non-Muslim by specifying his/her religion:

Bu yahudi kulları . . . (Your servant is a Jew),³⁰ or

Bu nasraniyye . . . cariye(ni)z . . . (Your servant is a Christian woman).³¹

More frequently, the religion is not specified. Instead, the petitioner's *zimmi* status is indicated:

²⁹ OAK 76\52, f. 19 and 74; 145\108; 1A\57290.

³⁰ NPTA 1\28, f. 26.

³¹ 1\11106.

Bu zimmi kulları . . . (Your servant is a non-Muslim subject).³²

or, in the case of a woman,

Bu zimmi cariyeniz . . . (Your servant is a non-Muslim woman).³³

Rarely, he/she is explicitly identified as an unbeliever:

Bu kulları . . . kâfir o lu kâfirim. (Your servant is . . . an unbeliever, son of an unbeliever).³⁴

On only one occasion amongst the documents surveyed does the petitioner refer to himself as a convert to Islam:

Bu muhtedi kulları . . . (Your servant is a convert to Islam).³⁵

1.5. *Place of residence and ethnic origin.* In addition to religious affiliation, we also find specified either the place of residence, or the ethnic origin (which can also be an indication of non-Muslim origin) of the petitioner, or both, e.g.:

Tekfurda undan Ermeni olub . . . (I am an Armenian from Tekfurdag).³⁶

Bu fakire-i nasraniyye-i cariyeniz Kadıköy sakinlerinden Rumi taifesinden olup . . . (Your servant is a Christian girl/woman from the inhabitants of Kadıköy, from the Greek people).³⁷

Bu kulları Gölükese den Rum o lu olup . . . (Your servant is a Greek from Gölükese).³⁸

Silistre den, Bulgar o lu olup . . . (I am a Bulgarian from Silistre).³⁹

If it is not mentioned in the “identification” element, one often finds the place of residence indicated below the text, as part of the signature of the petitioner.⁴⁰ Sometimes the region⁴¹ or even the country⁴² of origin is specified instead of the village of residence. Although

³² 1\10812, 1A\57029, 1A\57198.

³³ 1\10787, 1\10836.

³⁴ OAK 76\52, f. 45.

³⁵ Literally—the one who discovers and follows the right direction. See SL 6\18, f. 1.

³⁶ 1\10866.

³⁷ 1\11011.

³⁸ OAK 76\52, f. 30.

³⁹ OAK 76\52, f. 67.

⁴⁰ 1\11107; 1A\57319, f. 42; OAK 76\52, f. 5.

⁴¹ 1A\57064; CG 34\2, f. 4; 112\6768.

⁴² 1\11111 (Venice).

geographical place-names are mentioned only sporadically in the *kisve bahası* petitions, the villages and the regions encountered are mostly from the Balkans and Anatolia. Only occasionally do we find petitioners from other Ottoman territories.⁴³

1.6. *Other information.* In addition to the above most common descriptions, the petitioner may be characterized by some other personal information deemed important to the success of the petition—profession, physical disabilities, marital status, social status, etc. For example:

Bu kulları pir-i ihtiyar ve âmâ olup . . . (Your servant is old and blind).⁴⁴

Bu kulları hass ar(a)ba(?) bargiri ha(y)vangar tablasına iki senedür hizmet ederim . . . (Your subject has been a servant at the table of the Imperial stable-grooms for two years now).⁴⁵

Darbhane-i amire içinde küçü ünden berü kalcılık sanatında perverde olup . . . (Since a young age I have been trained in the craft of metal purifying in the State mint).⁴⁶

Bu kulları ehli maarifetten hakim olup . . . (Your servant is among the educated people).⁴⁷

2. Reasons for conversion

Although *kisve bahası* petitions are usually short and straightforward, we often find in the section following the “identification,” a summary of the petitioner’s life story and his/her reasons for conversion. This is usually the longest part of the exposition and the least prone to systematization. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish between several types of reasons for conversion. This task, however, will be left to the last chapter of the study, where I will look more carefully at the reasons cited for taking such a step.

3. Declaration of accepting Islam

The next element in the exposition’s structure is the declaration that the petitioner has decided to embrace Islam as his/her religion or has officially already done so.

⁴³ OAK 76\52 f. 5 (Baghdad).

⁴⁴ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 2.

⁴⁵ OAK 76\52, f. 45.

⁴⁶ NPTA 1\28, f. 26.

⁴⁷ 1A\6808.

3.1. *Enlightenment*. As a first step in the religious experience leading to the decision to embrace Islam, the petitioner points to his attainment of religious enlightenment. The formula used in most cases is:

Hidayet-i rabbani eri üp . . . (I reached the divine truth).⁴⁸

Variations on this formula include the use of the word “*hakk*” (divine ordinance) instead of “*rabbani*” (pertaining to God, divine).⁴⁹ Other variations are due to the use of more sophisticated language, a reflection of the petitioner’s membership in a higher social stratum, e.g.:

Hidayet-i subhani ve inayet-i samedani yeti üp . . .

(I have now been illuminated by the true faith and I have reached the divine truth),⁵⁰ or

Küfr-i zelaletinde olup yakinen zelaletinde oldu um musahede . . .

(I was lost in [the darkness] of infidelity. [However], I unquestionably realized my error and experienced God in his Glory).⁵¹

To distinguish the above statements from the preceding parts of the exposition that touch on his previous life, the petitioner may begin the declaration of enlightenment with the Arabic word “*hala*” (now, currently) or its Turkish synonyms “*imdi*,” “*bu defa*” (now, this time). Phrases like *bi-inayet-i Allah taala*⁵² (by the grace of God, the exalted), *el-hamdullah taala*⁵³ (May praise be to God) can also be added at this stage.

3.2. *Renunciation of former faith* and 3.3. *Embracing of Islam as one’s new religion*. After the declaration of having discovered the new path, the petitioner invariably declares the renunciation of his/her old religion and the decision to embrace Islam:

Batilden çıkıp hakk-ı din kabul edüp . . . (I have left the false and accepted the true religion)⁵⁴ or

Batil dini terk ve rücu’ edüp hakk-ı din olan din-i slami kabul . . . (I renounced the false religion and turned to the true religion—the religion of Islam).⁵⁵

⁴⁸ See 1\11106.

⁴⁹ See 1\11011.

⁵⁰ See NPTA 1\28, f. 26 (Appendix I, Document 6).

⁵¹ 1\11111.

⁵² OAK 76\52, f. 30.

⁵³ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 26.

⁵⁴ 1A\57265.

⁵⁵ 1\11106.

Often, the petitioner professes his need for spiritual guidance in order to make the difficult decision of renouncing his/her religion:

Batil dinden halas ve din-i Muhammedi telkin . . . (I want to be saved from the false religion and taught the articles of faith of the religion of Mohammed).⁵⁶

3.3. *Declaration of being honored with Islam.* The next element in the exposition of the petitions is a declaration that the petitioner had been, or would like to be, honored with “Holy Islam.” The usual formula was:

eref-i slam ile mü erref olup . . . (I was honored with Holy Islam)

The meaning of this formula remains obscure until we observe it being used in some of its extended versions, e.g.:

Huzur-i saadette eref-i slam ile mü erref olmak isterim . . . (I want to be honored with Holy Islam in Your Imperial Presence),⁵⁷

Efendimiz huzur-i âlilerinde slam ile mü erref olup . . . (I was honored with Islam in the Highest Presence of My Lord),⁵⁸

slam ile mü erref olmak isterim huzur-i âlilerinde . . . (I want to be honored with Islam in the presence of Your Majesty),⁵⁹

Padi ahım huzur-i erifinde iman ve slam kabul etmek isterim . . . (I want to accept the [true] faith and Islam in the Holy Presence of my Padishah).⁶⁰

It was also possible for the formula *slam ile mü erref olmak* to be substituted with the verb *telkin olmak* (to teach a novice to repeat the articles of faith), e.g.:

Huzur-i saadetinizde telkin din-i slam olunup . . . (I was taught the articles of faith and [embraced] the religion of Islam in your Illustrious Presence).⁶¹

These extended formulas point to the fact that in speaking of being “honored with Islam” the petitioner meant being “honored with Islam in the presence of the sultan.” In other words, with this element the petitions indicate that the new Muslim would like to have

⁵⁶ NPTA XX, 1\28, f. 50.

⁵⁷ 1\11011.

⁵⁸ 1A\6808.

⁵⁹ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 26.

⁶⁰ OAK 76 52, f. 45.

⁶¹ CG 34\2, f. 4.

an audience with the sultan, or more often, that he had already had one. There, he would be presented to the latter as a new Muslim (*nev müslim*) and possibly taught to pronounce the *ahadet*⁶² in order to demonstrate his new religious affiliation, and finally, to receive his/her new Muslim name (see below). It is not clear how much such a scenario reflected reality, i.e., how many times the sultan was actually present at the ceremony. From one petition we understand that most probably audiences took place during meetings of the Imperial council:

Bundan evvel divan günü huzur-i humayün slam ile mü errefe oldum. (On the previous meeting of the Imperial council, I was honored with Holy Islam in Your Imperial Presence).⁶³

Given our knowledge of the involvement of the Ottoman sultans in the affairs of the Imperial council in the second part of the seventeenth century, it is actually more likely than not that the sultan was not present at the audience. Occasionally, the petitions directly state that the act of “honoring” has been performed by high-ranking Ottoman officials, e.g.:

Bostancıba ı aga kulları ugunde eref-i slam ile mü erref olup . . . (I was honored with Holy Islam under the guidance of your servant, the commander of the Imperial guards).⁶⁴

That the converts indeed did appear at the palace is indicated by the formula of submission “*yüz sürüb geldim*” (I came to rub my face) which sometimes closes the element “declaration of being honored” e.g.:

eref-i slamle mü erref olmak için yüz sürüb geldim . . . (I came to rub my face [in the dust at your feet] [to plead] to be honored with Holy Islam [in Your Presence]).⁶⁵

However, we are informed from the petitions that audiences or ceremonies were performed not only in the palace or even in the cap-

⁶² See SI 6\18, f. 2, in which it is written *kelime-i mü ehadetini bu kulları telkin etti i ki . . .* (after this servant of yours was taught the words of the *ahadet*). See also Uzunçar ılı, *Merkez*, 29.

⁶³ I\11107.

⁶⁴ IA\57290. According to Uzunçar ılı (*Merkez*, 28), the Grand Vizier also auditioned new Muslims.

⁶⁵ I\10866.

ital, but could also take place elsewhere, for example, during a royal hunt.⁶⁶

There are petitions in which the “declaration of being honored” is the only element of the exposition to be found. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is this element that contains the essence of the exposition and that has a bearing on the meaning of the other elements.

4. Request

After this culmination, so to speak, in the “declaration of being honored,” the exposition takes a new turn, in which the petitioner puts into words his actual request. This was the part of the petition of most importance to the new Muslim. Everything up to this point constituted, one may say, a “preamble,” or rationalization of the request.

4.1. *Opening.* It was pointed out earlier that the petitions sometimes lack any explicit reference at the start of the exposition to the fact that they are of this particular chancery genre. In most cases, though, we encounter formulas that declare the document to be a petition at the beginning of the request, e.g.:

Mercudur ki . . . ([My] request is the following . . .)

Niyaz olunur ki . . . (I plead that . . .)

Niyazımdur ki . . . (My plea is the following . . .)

Occasionally, the formula *rica olunur* (I request) can be found at the end of the request.⁶⁷ Other variations include the repetition of some of the honorific titles of the sultan, used at the beginning of the petition, e.g.:

Merahim-i âliyelerinden mercudur ki . . . ([My] request from the Merciful Most High is as follows . . .)⁶⁸ or

Devletlî sultanımdan mercudur ki . . . ([My] request from my Illustrious Sultan is as follows . . .).⁶⁹

⁶⁶ See 1\10817.

⁶⁷ OAK 76\52, f. 30 and NPTA XX 1\28, f. 50.

⁶⁸ 1\11111; NPTA XX 1\28 f. 26.

⁶⁹ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 26.

4.2. *Legal grounds for the request.* After this transition-introduction, the petitioner explains the grounds for his/her request. The basic formulas were strictly three: *adet üzere*⁷⁰ (according to the custom, practice), its synonym *mutad üzere*,⁷¹ and *kanun üzere*⁷² (according to the sultanic law), or its variant *kanun-i padi ah üzere* (according to the law of the Padishah). The word *kadim* (old, ancient) was often added for emphasis, e.g.:

Mutad-i kadim üzere . . . (according to the old custom . . .).⁷³

The notion of it being a custom to make such a request is sometimes conveyed descriptively, e.g.:

Gerici eyyandan berü . . . (from old times . . .).⁷⁴

The fact that the petitioners did not explicitly refer to Islamic law (*eriat*) when justifying themselves is a fact of particular importance to this study. The implications of this observation, however, will be deferred to the next chapter.

4.3. *Appeal for charity.* The legal grounds for the request having been established, the new Muslim would have felt it appropriate to state his/her request. However, the request is made always to appear as subject to the personal discretion of the sultan. For this reason, it is presented in the form of an appeal to the kindness and generosity of the latter as an Islamic ruler, who was traditionally perceived as obliged to provide charity to the poor. Special formulas conveyed that notion. I define these formulas as the next semantic section in the structure of the exposition. Although the “appeal for charity” section follows the wording of the request itself, grammatically, the latter is the object of the “appeal for charity.” Thus, I find it more appropriate to discuss it before addressing myself to the structure of the request itself.

The formulas used in this element are comprised of verb phrases, which consist of combinations of the Arabic verbal nouns *mesrur*

⁷⁰ See 1\10817, f. 4, 6, 7, 20, 21, 22 and 24.

⁷¹ See 1\10817, f. 5, 9, 16; 1\10829; NPTA XX 1\28 f. 10.

⁷² See 1\10787, f. 1, 2; 1\10817, f. 11; CG 34\2, f. 2, 3, 6; NPTA XX 1\28, f. 23.

⁷³ 1\10817.

⁷⁴ 1A\57290.

(made glad, rejoiced) or *ihsan* (being good, fulfilling one's duty to God, acting kindly, beneficently) and the passive voice of the Turkish verbal infinitives *buyurulmak* (to be ordered, decreed) and *olunmak* (to be done to, with, by). The combinations *ihsan buyurulmak/olunmak* (may you kindly order/do . . .), or the variation *sadaka ve ihsan buyurulmak* (may you order kindly and charitably),⁷⁵ and *mesur buyurulmak* (may you order [that I be made] glad [by])⁷⁶ are the ones most often encountered. Occasionally, we find the “appeal for charity” notion conveyed only by the more colloquial verb *verilmek* (to be given).⁷⁷

4.4. *Formulation of the request.* As in the case of the “reasons for conversion” element (see 2. above), the “formulation of the request” is difficult to systematize. Despite the overall diversity of the requests, most often they simply contain the words *kisve* (clothes) or *sadaka* (charity, donation), or phrases containing these words, e.g., *kisve bahası* (cash value of clothes) and *kisve ve sadaka* (clothes and [cash] donation). Typical renderings of the two elements—the “appeal for charity” and the “formulation of the request”—are:

Kisve [ve] sadaka ve(sic.) ihsan buyurulmak (May you kindly order [that I be given] clothes and a donation [in cash]),⁷⁸ or

Kisvemiz ihsan olunmak (May you kindly order [that I be given] the benefit of my clothes),⁷⁹ or

Kisve bahasım ihsan buyurulup (May you kindly order that I be given [the cash] value of my clothes).⁸⁰

Although the present chapter discusses only the structure of the documents, as in the case of the formula “honored with Islam,” the terms *kisve* and *kisve bahası* require some clarification. According to Islamic law, non-Muslims were supposed to wear distinctive clothes. Therefore, when a non-Muslim changed his religious affiliation and accepted Islam, he/she was expected to change his clothing for new, Muslim attire, as a sign of belonging to Islam. The “clothes” or the “cash value of clothes” that the new-Muslim petitioners aspired to

⁷⁵ See for example 1\10817 f. 12 and 15; 1\11074.

⁷⁶ See for example OAK 76\52 f. 5; 1A\57290.

⁷⁷ See 1\10817 f. 11.

⁷⁸ Ibid., f. 12.

⁷⁹ Ibid., f. 21.

⁸⁰ 1A\57319, f. 6.

consisted in this new attire or its cash equivalent. In other words, the petitioners requested that the state supply the clothes or pay for the expense of obtaining them.⁸¹ This conclusion is confirmed by the formula *taraf-i miriden kisve ihsan buyurulmak* (may you kindly order [that I be supplied with] clothes by the state), which we find in some petitions. Frequently, the word “*kisve*” was qualified by the phrase *bir kat* (one set), i.e., *bir kat kisve* (one set of clothes).

I have decided to attribute the term “*kisve bahası* petitions” to documents of this sort precisely because the above request is encountered so often in the petitions. The terms *kisve* and *kisve bahası* are also used invariably in the inscriptions in the margins of the document.⁸² It simply better reflects the specific nature of these petitions. Since questions such as the origin of this practice and the price and methods of payment of *kisve bahası*, etc., will be the subject of discussion in the following chapters, I will turn my attention to other sorts of requests made by new Muslims.

Another type of request was expressed by the word “*çırak/çera*”⁸³ (apprentice, novice, one who holds an office or appointment through the nomination of another). In other words, this type of petition went beyond the simple request to be granted the clothing appropriate to Muslims. Its object was to obtain for the petitioner a position in the service of the state. In most cases, the petition even specifies the kind of position desired, e.g.:

Cebehane oca ma çırak buyurulup (May you order that I be appointed to the corps of the arsenal),⁸⁴ or

Yeniçeri oca ma çırak buyurulup (May you order that I be appointed to the Janissary corps).⁸⁵

Where the position is not specified, it can be described in general terms, e.g.:

Bir dîrlik ile çera v buyurulmak (May you order that I be appointed to an office [giving me] a livelihood).⁸⁶

⁸¹ It will become evident later that the state preferred the second option, i.e., to pay for the clothes.

⁸² See below.

⁸³ *Çera* is the Persian form of the word. I have encountered both forms used in the petitions.

⁸⁴ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 23.

⁸⁵ 1A\57319, f. 33.

⁸⁶ 112\6468.

We find very often the formula *bir nan para ile* (literally, money for bread) used in describing the desired position, e.g.:

Sipahi oca ında bir nan para ile çıra olunmak (to be appointed to the *sipahi* corps to make my living).⁸⁷

Some other terms found in combination with *çıra* are *zümre* (class, group) and *efruhte* or *rü en* (enlightened, bright), e.g.:

Çıra ı efrufte zümresine ilhak buyurulasın (May you order that I be appointed to the group of your enlightened servants).⁸⁸

It was also possible for the petitioner to combine the two types of request by asking for the clothing appropriate to the particular position, e.g.:

Bostancı kisvem ihsan buyurulmak (May you order that I be given the uniform of palace guard),⁸⁹ or

Yeniçeri oca ında çıra ı ve . . . yeniçeri kisvesi ihsan buyurulmak (May you order kindly that I be appointed to the Janissary corps and given a Janissary uniform).⁹⁰

Variations of this formula include the addition of the phrase *bu kullarına* (to this servant of yours) to the wording of the request in order to make it more personal.

The *kisve bahası* petitions are not limited only to requests for “clothing” or “position.” We find, for example, requests for money for a dowry,⁹¹ a pension,⁹² a source of income from state customs,⁹³ the chance to be circumcised along with the prince,⁹⁴ etc. However, these were more difficult to express in formulas and thus, will not be discussed in detail here.

5. Acknowledgment of one’s inferiority

The power of the sultan and the insignificance of the petitioner were acknowledged once again after the request was written down. The

⁸⁷ CG 34\2, f. 4.

⁸⁸ 1A\6808.

⁸⁹ 1\11079.

⁹⁰ CG 34\2, f. 6.

⁹¹ OAK 170\31.

⁹² NPTA XX 1\28, f. 2.

⁹³ SL 6\18, f. 4.

⁹⁴ 1A\57265.

formulas expressing this acknowledgment are typical of all kinds of petitions and reports of officials asking the sultan for a decision. Their purpose was to emphasize the inferiority of the person submitting the document and the power of the sultan, the only one having the capacity to pronounce on the issue, e.g.:

Baki emr-ü ferman sultanımındır (The rest is [left] to the decree of my Sultan), or

Babında ferman-ı saadetli sultanım hazretlerindir (In this regard, the decree is up to your Majesty, my Illustrious Sultan).⁹⁵

Again, it should be pointed out that these formulas can be used in petitions to high-ranking officials and not only to the sultan.

III. *Final Protocol*

1. Signature

The signature is the last element in the structure of *kisve bahası* petitions. It is usually considered part of the final protocol. However, in the general composition of these petitions, the signature is semantically an element of the identification of the petitioner and as such needs to be discussed in relation to the exposition. It was noted above that the name of the petitioner was never mentioned in the exposition and actually seldom mentioned anywhere in the document (see II.1. above). If present, it only ever appears below the text, in the signature. Usually, it is the newly assumed Muslim name and only occasionally the name given at birth.⁹⁶ This new identity of the petitioner indicated by his/her Muslim name is in stark contrast to the beginning of the document where he/she is always identified as non-Muslim.

Where the name is not mentioned in the signature, the latter simply consists of the word “*bende*” (your servant) or the more specific phrase “*bende-i nev müslim*” (your servant, the new Muslim). I surmise that the petitioners who signed the petition using the above formulas, had not yet received a Muslim name. Such a name would be given

⁹⁵ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 2.

⁹⁶ See 1\11082, 1A\57265.

to them at the royal audience.⁹⁷ Occasionally, a petitioner would sign his Christian name for lack of any other.⁹⁸

2. Date

The date of a document's writing is normally present in Ottoman documents as part of the final protocol. In *kisve bahası* petitions, however, it is invariably lacking. Nevertheless, the approximate date of writing can be determined by the dates of the inscriptions entered on the margins of the document (see below).

IV. Inscriptions

The officials' endorsements and other marginal annotations inscribed on documents after their issuance rarely receive any attention in surveys of Ottoman diplomatics,⁹⁹ and, consequently, in the analysis of Ottoman documents. However, they can be very important for clarifying and understanding the information given in the text of a document, especially so in the case of *kisve bahası* petitions. Thus, I believe, a detailed discussion of the inscriptions is essential to an accurate structural analysis of these documents. The inscriptions in *kisve bahası* petitions were usually: 1) endorsements by the Grand Vizier; 2) endorsement by the Finance minister (*ba defterdar*); and 3) annotations made in the Central Accounting Department (*ba muhasebe*).

1. Endorsement of the Grand Vizier

This was usually the first endorsement placed on the petition. It was executed in the chancery of the Grand Vizier and placed on the blank, top portion of the document, just below the *hüve*. In essence, the endorsement was an order to the *ba defterdar* or his deputy (*defterdar vekili*)¹⁰⁰ to pay the petitioner the cash equivalent of Muslim attire (*kisve bahası*), regardless of the request in the petition. In other words, the purpose of the Grand Vizier's endorsement was to start

⁹⁷ See Uzunçar ılı, *Merkez*, 28.

⁹⁸ See 1A\57265.

⁹⁹ A notable exception is the work of A. Velkov. See Velkov, *Vidove*, and idem, "Dopalnitelni vpisvaniya varhu osmanskite finansovi dokumenti ot XVI do XVIII v.: Diplomatičko-paleografsko prouchvane [Inscriptions on Ottoman Financial Documents from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries: A Diplomatico-paleographical Study]," *INBKM*, 14 (1976), 83–140.

¹⁰⁰ See 1\10817 f. 4–25.

the administrative procedure of allocating and delivering to the new Muslim the funds for a new set of clothes from the state treasury. The basic form of the endorsement was:

Mutad/kanun üzere bir nefere kisve/kisve bahası virilmek/virile diyü (Give to the [aforementioned] person the cash equivalent of the clothes according to the law/custom).

We find also expanded versions of the endorsement, which include some details from the petition, e.g.:

Mezbur huzur-i humayün eref-i slam müserref olma la mutad üzere kisvesi vir-ile diyü ([Since] the aforementioned has been honored with Holy Islam in the Imperial Presence, give him [the cash equivalent of] the clothes according to custom).¹⁰¹

Some variations on the above formulas include the use of the word “*mucibince*” (accordingly), in place of *mutad/kanun üzere*.¹⁰² The word “*adet*” never appears here as a synonym of the latter pair, despite such usage in the petition itself (see II.4.2). The impersonal expression “*bir nefer*” (a person/individual) is sometimes replaced by *nev müslim-i mezbur* (the aforementioned new Muslim).¹⁰³ The endorsement may also start with a salutation to the *ba defterdar*, e.g.:

nayetlü ba defterdar efendi . . . (Gracious *ba defterdar*, Sir).¹⁰⁴

The salutation is not included in most of the Grand Vizieral endorsements, however, *pace* Velkov’s opinion to the contrary.¹⁰⁵

Other information often included in the endorsement is the amount of money payable to the petitioner or the type of clothing to be issued.¹⁰⁶ Such additional information is usually found in cases when the payment or the set of clothes was more generous than usual. In such an event, the Grand Vizier might even have given an explanation for this generosity in his endorsement.¹⁰⁷ Endorsements of this type are, consequently, longer, and sometimes take up the whole blank space above the petition.¹⁰⁸ Such extended endorsements are

¹⁰¹ See I\10817, f. 4–25.

¹⁰² See I\3565, f. 1.

¹⁰³ I\10921, f. 1.

¹⁰⁴ I\10923, CG 34\2, f. 7.

¹⁰⁵ Velkov, “Vpisvaniya,” 88.

¹⁰⁶ See for example I\11107; NPTA XX I\28 f. 26; I\10866.

¹⁰⁷ See NPTA XX I\28 f. 2; I\11107.

¹⁰⁸ See NPTA XX I\28 f. 2.

valuable to us in that, whenever the endorsement specifies the type of clothing to be given or paid to the petitioner, e.g., *yeniçeri kisvesi*, we can determine whatever action was taken in regard to a request for an appointment.¹⁰⁹



Grand Vizier's *sahh*

As a rule, the word “*sahh*” (correct), which expressed the agreement of the Grand Vizier with the endorsement, is found above the latter. The *sahh* was written by the Grand Vizier’s own hand or at least in his presence.¹¹⁰ The endorsement of the Grand Vizier was always completed by the word “*buyurultu*” (this is my command)¹¹¹ written below the endorsement. Both the *sahh*

and the *buyurultu* had evolved graphically into symbols in the chancery practice. The characteristic feature of the *sahh* was that the lower part of the letter “he” was written with a sharp stroke, instead of a rounded one, and extended with a sweeping curve, which crossed the word from right to left pointing upwards. The *buyurultu* was written as simple spiral, wider at the bottom and ending again with a curve pointing upwards.



Buyurultu

The Grand Vizier’s endorsements were usually dated. Since the petition itself was not, the date found below the endorsement of the Grand Vizier is usually the closest we can come to the original writing of the document (the other endorsements were dated as well). In my opinion, this should be the date used for dating the document.

2. Final endorsement of the Grand Vizier

Infrequently, petitions were returned to the office of the Grand Vizier with a *telhis*¹¹² (report, memo) from the *ba defterdar* (see below). In

¹⁰⁹ See for example 1\10981, f. 5.

¹¹⁰ See Uzunçar ılı, *Merkez*, 136.

¹¹¹ Both Fekete and Uzunçar ılı hold the opinion that *buyurultu* is the past tense, 3rd person, singular, passive voice of the verb *buyurmak*; see L. Fekete, *Einführung in die osmanisch-türkische Diplomatie der türkischen Botmässigkeit in Ungarn*, (Budapest, 1926), LIV, and Uzunçar ılı, “Buyurultu,” *Bellekten*, 5 (1941), 289. Nedkov’s opinion is that *buyurultu* is a verbal noun from the verb *buyurulmak* with the affix *-tu*, as in *gürültü*; see Nedkov, *Diplomatika*, 154:n55.

¹¹² For the *telhis* see S. Faroqi, *Die Vorlagen*; P. Fodor, “Telhis”; Velkov, “Vpislvaniya,” 121–125; Nedkov, *Diplomatika*, 145–146. Velkov is the only one to discuss the *telhis* of the *ba defterdar*.

such petitions, a second, final endorsement of the Grand Vizier was inscribed, ordering that the petition be enacted according to the *telhis*, e.g.:

*Telhis mucibince tezkeresi verilme*k (Give a money order according to the *telhis*).¹¹³

The final endorsements of the Grand Vizier were referred to as *ferman-i âli* (Imperial edict) in the Ottoman chancery practice.¹¹⁴ They were also completed with *sahh* and *buyurultu*, and dated.

3. Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*

After the endorsement of the Grand Vizier was placed on the document, the petition was sent to the office of the *ba defterdar*, who ultimately gave orders on financial matters. In the office of the *ba defterdar*, the petition was simply directed to the Central Accounting Department (*ba muhasebe*) bearing the endorsement: *tezkeresi virile* (issue/give a *tezkere* [for the clothes]). The term “*tezkere*” is shorthand for “*tezkere-i hazine*,” which in Ottoman chancery practice was used to denote either a document that could be exchanged for cash payable by the state treasury or a document for accounting money as income-expenditure (*irad ve masraf*).¹¹⁵ Put in modern terms, the *ba defterdar* authorized the issue of a Treasury bill to the petitioner. The latter could then cash it at the office of the state treasury or through a money-changer who, in turn, would claim the money from the state. Once the money order was cashed, it was sent to the department known as *ruzmançe-i evvel* (also called *ruzmançe-i humayûn*), where it was again calculated, registered and preserved.¹¹⁶

Occasionally, such as when the Grand Vizier had ordered a more generous than usual set of clothes to be paid/given to a new Muslim, the *ba defterdar* could request from the *ba muhasebe* that an estimate be prepared for the value of the clothes. This request could be worded as follows:

Mükemmel kisve bahası ba muhasebe'den hesap olunur (The value of a complete set of clothes to be calculated by the *ba muhasebe*),¹¹⁷ or

¹¹³ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 26.

¹¹⁴ Velkov, “Vpisvaniya,” 128.

¹¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 99–100, and *idem*, *Vidove*, 272.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ 1\11056.

Mükemmel kisvenin mukadderisi der kenar ([Give] an estimate for [the value of] a complete set of clothes in the margin [of the document]).¹¹⁸

After the estimate had been received, the *ba defterdar* would write a second endorsement authorizing the issuance of a Treasury bill, but now specifying the amount to be spent, e.g.:

Der kenar mucibince iki nefere mükemmel kisve bahası için elli guru tezkeresi virile (Issue a money order of fifty *guru* to the two [aforementioned] individuals for a complete set of clothes according to [the estimate on] the margin [of the document]).¹¹⁹

In exceptional situations, the *ba muhasebe* could request, writing again on the margins of the petition, an Imperial order (*ferman-i âli*) so that the Treasury bill could be issued. Such a petition was then



Topluca imza

returned to the office of the *ba defterdar* who would write a *telhis* on the margin, asking the Grand Vizier for an Imperial order (see IV.2. above) to the *ba muhasebe*.¹²⁰ The *telhis* was signed with the oval signature of the *ba defterdar* (*toplucu imza*). The latter's use is a sign that the *telhis* was written by the *ba defterdar* himself and not

by the Grand Vizier's secretary (*telhisçi*).¹²¹ I did not encounter the so-called "tail" signature of the *ba defterdar* (*kuyruklu imza*)¹²² in *kisve bahası* petitions, a fact that confirms Velkov's observation that the latter signature was not used in the short *telhises*, directed to the Grand Vizier.¹²³ When the document was returned to the office of



Ba defterdar's sahh

the *ba defterdar* with the final endorsement of the Grand Vizier ordering the issue of a Treasury bill (see above), the *ba defterdar* would write the word "*sahh*" under the Grand Vizier's *buyurultu*. There is a difference, however, between the *ba defterdar's sahh* and the Grand Vizier's *sahh*. In the former, the sweeping curve of the letter

¹¹⁸ 1A\6808.

¹¹⁹ 1\11056.

¹²⁰ See 1A\57319, f. 1; NPTA XX 1\28 f. 26.

¹²¹ Velkov, "Vpisvaniya," 123–124.

¹²² For the *kuyruklu imza* see Velkov, "Opashatiya podpis na bashdefterdarite v osmanskata imperia prez XVI–XVIII v.," *INBKM*, 16 (1981), 183–211; Uzunçar ılı, *Merkez*, 329 and M. Z. Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, vol. 2 (Istanbul, 1951), 333. The latter refers to the *kuyruklu imza* as *kuyruklu buyurultu*.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 183:n3.

“he” points downwards, in a fashion similar to the *koyruklu imza*. The *ba defterdar*’s *sahh* is also known as the *küçük sahh* (small *sahh*). The endorsements of the *ba defterdar* may also be dated; however, more often than not this is not the case.

4. Annotation of the *ba muhasebe*

A note from the office of the *ba muhasebe* is rarely missing from *kisve bahası* petitions.¹²⁴ The office of the *ba muhasebe* was the last one to which the petitions were sent and it was there that final action was taken to settle the financial side of the petition, i.e., the issuance of a Treasury bill in payment of the *kisve bahası* or a document entitling the petitioner to some other financial benefit. Officials in the *ba muhasebe* recorded on the petition itself that these documents had been issued, and the date when this had occurred. This was meant to indicate the completion of the administrative process and perhaps to counteract illegal attempts to use the petition. In most cases, the annotation contained the following text:

Tezkere/tezkere-i hazine dade . . . [date] (The money order was issued on [date]).

This note was usually placed on the lower half of the margin, and it was always dated.¹²⁵ The *ba muhasebe*’s inscription apparently always constituted the final annotation on our petitions. However, in cases where the *ba muhasebe* had to respond to inquiries from the *ba defterdar* (see above), some petitions showed more than one annotation issued by this office.¹²⁶ Especially interesting, although extremely difficult to read because of the *siyakat* script, in which they were written, are the excerpts from the accounts of the *ba muhasebe*, in which the cost of the *kisve bahası* was broken down. These records provided details about the pieces of clothing concerned, the fabric they were made of, the quantity and color of fabric needed to tailor each piece of clothing, the cost of tailoring, etc.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ See for example OAK 76\52, f. 30, 39, 45; 1\10923; CG 34\2, f. 4.

¹²⁵ For petitions in which the *ba muhasebe* resolution is written elsewhere on the document see: 1\3565, 1\10820 (below the text of the petition); 1A\57319, f. 29, 1\11106 (above the text).

¹²⁶ See for example 1A\57290; 1A\6808; NPTA XX 1\28, f. 2 and 26, 1\11056.

¹²⁷ See 1\10987; OAK 53\23, f. 3, and NPTA XX 1\28, f. 26 in particular (Appendix I, Document 6).

5. Other endorsements and inscriptions

5.1. *The Sultan's endorsement.* In addition to endorsements issued by the three offices described above, a sultan's endorsement could also appear in exceptional circumstances. Such an endorsement was found in only one out of all the petitions at my disposal. The endorsement in this case orders the regular allocation of funds from the revenues of Istanbul's customs for the maintenance of a man and his seven children, who had converted to Islam.¹²⁸ Structurally, this endorsement is similar to the Grand Vizier's endorsement. It begins with a salutation to the Grand Vizier, in our case Mustafa Pasha,¹²⁹ and ends with a term familiar from the sultan's edicts: "*görülesin*" (see to [the matter] accordingly). Below the endorsement, we find inscribed "*buyurultu,*" which, however, was most probably written by the Grand Vizier and not the sultan.¹³⁰

5.2. *Yad-i od.* We often find another interesting inscription on the verso of *kisve bahası* petitions. It is a record of the palace functionary, most often a *çavu* (a member of a corps of messengers attached to the Divan), to whom the petition was given after the new Muslim attended the royal audience. The formula of the inscription usually reads:

Yad-i od...[name] *çavu* ([Given] personally to [name] *çavu*).

From a document dated 1682¹³¹ we understand that there was by this time a *çavu* bearing the title "*çavu -i nev müslim.*" This fact can be only interpreted in the sense that there was need of a person to deal with petitioners, new Muslims, on a regular basis and that such a person was officially appointed. His functions most probably included the delivery of the petition to the offices from which approval was sought, so that the petitioner would be able to receive the money order at the completion of the administrative process. The dates of

¹²⁸ See 1A\6783.

¹²⁹ Kara Mustafa Merzifonlu, Grand Vizier (1676–1684).

¹³⁰ In Velkov's opinion ("Vpisvaniya," 127) the sultan's endorsement did not end with *buyurultu*. Hence, bearing in mind that there was no endorsement of the Grand Vizier on the document in question, we may consider the possibility that the Grand Vizier placed the *buyurultu* under the sultan's endorsement.

¹³¹ 1A\66334, f. 2.

the consecutive endorsements placed on the petitions reveal that all necessary endorsements were obtained usually in the space of 2–3 days or, occasionally, in the incredibly short period of one day. Such bureaucratic efficiency, enviable even in our own day, indicates in my opinion that personal interest may have played a role, i.e., the palace functionary may have received a portion of the money allocated to the new Muslim from the new Muslim himself.

5.3. *Summaries.* It was also possible that an inscription from the *ba muhasebe* that had no relation to the request made in that particular petition could find its way onto a document. From my own observation, such endorsements occurred when the petition had been returned to the office of *ba defterdar* for some reason, e.g., in order for the latter to write a *telhis*. Endorsements of this type were usually short summaries of expenses, e.g., of money orders issued for new Muslims in a particular period.¹³² In other words, the *ba muhasebe* took the opportunity to provide this information to the *ba defterdar* or to ask his approval for expenses somehow not approved earlier. The sign of the *ba defterdar*'s approval—the *toplucu imza*—is usually found under these endorsements.

B. *Logical Level*

Having described the physical structure of the *kisve bahası* petitions, I would like to proceed with the logical level of analysis, namely, to establish the entities and relationships pertaining to the data-structure of petitions. Furthermore, since the *entity-relationship* data model attempts to describe the meaning of the data in a conceptual schema, the final product of the logical analysis will be presented in graphic form.

The Superstructure of Kisve Bahası Petitions

First, based on the physical structure of the expositions found in the petitions and considering the symbolic meaning of some of the semantic elements in the structure, the following entity-symbols (in boxes) and attributes (numbered) can be distinguished:

¹³² See 1A\57319, f. 1; CG 80\13; 1\10849.

Acknowledgment of sultan's grandeur¹³³

1. Salutation
2. Benediction

Identity

1. Status of *kul*
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Religion
5. Ethnic group
6. Residence
7. Other information

Reasons for conversion

Enlightenment

Renouncement of former religion

Embracing Islam

Being honored by the sultan

1. Date¹³⁴
2. Place of honoring
3. Honored by

Opening of the request

Legal grounds for the request

Appeal for charity

¹³³ See *Salutation to the sultan* (I.2.) above.

¹³⁴ See *Endorsement of the Grand Vizier* (IV.1.) above.

Expected reward¹³⁵

1. Amount
2. Pieces of clothing
3. Position

Acknowledgment of one's inferiority

New Muslim identity¹³⁶

1. Name
2. Status of "new Muslim."

The next step in the logical level of description is to determine the relationships among the above entity-symbols. This is, in fact, facilitated by the grammatical and logical links at the physical level.

The first entity-symbol in the list—Acknowledgment of grandeur—is represented on the physical level by a sentence grammatically completed with the help of the form *olsun*, an imperative of the verb *olmak*, as its predicate. The connection between the latter sentence and the next one, representing the entity-symbols Identity through Being honored by the sultan, is only logical. In its turn, the second sentence usually consists of a chain of subordinate clauses, each clause representing an entity. The subordinate clauses are connected with the help of gerunds ending in *-ıp/-up*, the latter being one of the most often used means of establishing this type of connection in Ottoman-Turkish. Grammatically, the second sentence is completed by the use of the form *oldum*, a simple past of the verb *olmak*, in the Being honored by the sultan element. Instead of *oldum*, we also find the form *olunur*, the present perfect of *olmak*, and *-dir*, a present tense of the verb *imək*, in the next entity-symbol—Opening of the request. The completion of the latter entity-symbol with the particle *-ki* indicates a radical break in the grammatical structure of the text.

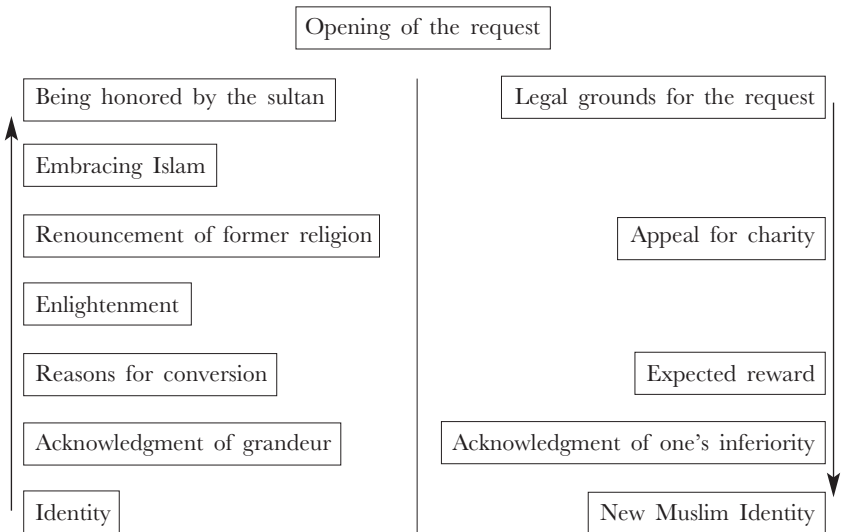
The next sentence consists of a subordinate clause and a main clause. The former introduces the entity-symbols—Legal grounds for

¹³⁵ See *Formulation of the request* (II.2), *Endorsement of the Grand Vizier* (IV.1) and *Annotation of the Ba muhasebe* (IV.4.) above.

¹³⁶ See *Signature* (III.1) above.

the request], Appeal for charity] and Expected reward]—which in this clause function as an adverbial phrase, predicate and object respectively. The main clause represents the entity-symbol—[Acknowledgment of one's inferiority]. The two clauses are connected with the help of either the *-dik* or *-mak* gerund (*ihsan buyurulmak/buyuruldu u*). The sentence is always completed grammatically by the present form of the verb *imek* (*sultanmındır*). The last entity-symbol to be considered in the exposition is the [New Muslim identity], which on a physical level is only logically connected to the rest.

In addition to the grammatical unfolding of the structure of the petition, there is a parallel unfolding of narrative intonation also reflecting the relationships between the entities. This intonation appears to ascend between the entity-symbols [Identity] and [Being honored by the sultan], culminating in the latter, and to descend between [Legal grounds for the request] and [New Muslim identity]. The two intonations are separated by a plateau represented by the [Opening of the request] entity-symbol. Regardless of which of the two criteria—grammatical or tonal—we acknowledge, two groups, i.e., sets, of entity-symbols are clearly distinguishable. Their arrangement may be seen in the following chart:



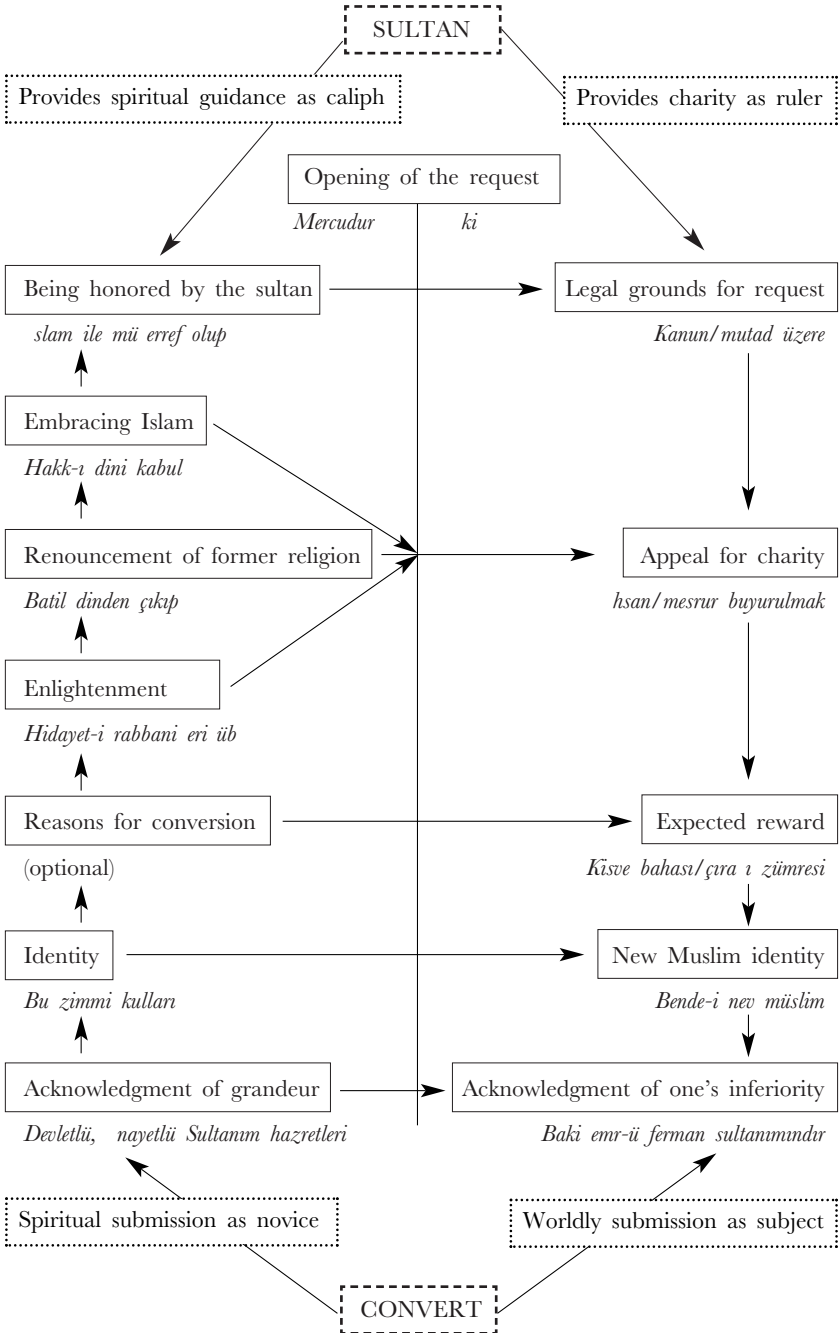
It is obvious that the first entity-symbols set is related to the process of the petitioner's conversion to Islam and the second to the process

of his requesting a reward for that action. Both sets, however, are united by their logical connection with the new Muslim and the sultan, regardless whether the conversion has happened in the presence of the sultan or other high-ranking official. After all, the new Muslim ultimately aimed at securing an audience with the sultan while the latter was deemed to have had the ultimate say in the matter of his request. Therefore, it is more appropriate to perceive the two sets of entity-symbols as relationship sets. The first set reflects the spiritual relationship between the petitioner, as a religious novice seeking guidance, and the sultan, as a caliph providing such guidance. Each entity-symbol in this “novice-caliph” relationship set is a stage in the development of the relationship between the two. These were, if not the actual stages, at least the ones that a convert was presumed to have experienced according to the ethical norms of the society. Has the convert actually seen the sultan or was the sultan in a position to indeed furnish a spiritual guidance is, thus, irrelevant. The second set reflects the secular relationship between subject and ruler. Each entity-symbol in this “subject-ruler” relationship set reflects the stages in the worldly submission of a subject. Furthermore, the two relationship sets are connected at each stage of the development of the relationship, e.g., the stage of Identity in the first set corresponds to the stage of New Muslim identity in the second one, just as the stage of Reasons for conversion has the stage of Expected reward as its counterpart, etc.

With the above considerations in mind, the following schema (Graph 3) appears to reflect all the relationships and data entities that my database of expositions contains. The schema is an abstract view of the structure at the physical level, i.e., a structure of the structure, and thus, I term it the “superstructure” of the petitions of new Muslims.” For the sake of simplicity, the schema includes only the entity-symbols, and not their attributes.

Summary

To conclude our analysis of the structure of *kisve bahası* petitions, the following points may be made with regard to their value as sources for conversion to Islam in the period under question:



Graph 3. Superstructure of the *Kısve Bahası* Petitions

1. According to their basic diplomatic features, *kisve bahası* petitions are documents pertaining to the Ottoman chancery genre of *arz-i hal* and, in their protocol section, conform to the formal Ottoman chancery style. Their value to the historian, however, comes from the information contained in the exposition. The latter was related to the requests of individuals who had converted or were about to convert to Islam in the presence of the sultan.
2. Despite the fact that most petitions were not written by the converts themselves, these documents followed in their exposition section a particular model of composition (superstructure), which allowed for the inclusion of data relevant to the act of conversion in general as well as to the new Muslims' personalities.
3. Another important characteristic of the petitions' superstructure is that related fields of data could be combined as sets of data. The two major sets are the "novice-caliph" and "subject-ruler" relationship sets, revealing the social relations between the two protagonists in their capacity as subject and ruler, religious novice and spiritual leader. Minor sets include, for example, data depicting each of the steps followed in one's conversion to Islam as established by the ethical norms of Muslim society. The analysis of the petitions as sets of data, therefore, would allow the reconstruction of the character of conversion as a social process based on a dichotomy—spiritual vs. material, new vs. former identity of the new Muslim, etc.
4. The potential of the *kisve bahası* petitions' superstructure for this study lies also in the types of data revealing the convert's identity. The data fields include the petitioner's name, age, gender, ethnic origin, place of residence, confessional as well as social affiliation, reasons for conversion and the reward desired in return. Therefore, as sources, the petitions allow for the construction of a collective portrait of the petitioners and give insights into the social mentality of a convert and his attitude towards Islam.
5. There is no indication whatsoever in the petitions' superstructure pointing to involuntary conversion to Islam. On the contrary, the data suggests that these people actively sought conversion in the presence of the sultan.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CONVERSION: *KISVE BAHASI* PETITIONS AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Some Statistical Observations

In chapter 4, we have had occasion to point out the essentially different nature of the information revealed by *kisve bahasi* petitions, when compared to that found in tax registers. Certainly, we cannot compare tax registers with their immense statistical value to the petitions of new Muslims which survive in limited numbers only. However, the latter are still useful as they indicate certain changes in the process of conversion and concomitantly, in Ottoman society in general.

As pointed out in the beginning of the study, my database of petitions consists of 636 documents issued in the names of 755 people and falling within the period 1672–1735. Table 9 below presents the distribution of documents and new Muslims per year. I have also included the major internal and external events that occurred during the period. As a result, the reader may establish a link between the number of petitions and new Muslims in a particular year and the most significant events of the year concerned.

Table 9. Distribution of *kisve bahasi* petitions and new Muslims per year compared to events from the Ottoman history¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Petitions</i>	<i>New Muslims</i>	<i>Major events</i>
1671	1	1	Mehmed IV (1648–87)
1672	1	1	War with Poland
1673	8	8	Ottomans defeated at Khotin (Hotin)
1674	5	5	
1675	5	5	

¹ The table includes all documents listed in Appendix 2 as well as the two documents published by Uzunçar ılı—see Uzunçar ılı, *Merkez*, Appendix, Facsimiles 27 and 28.

Table 9 (*cont.*)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Petitions</i>	<i>New Muslims</i>	<i>Major events</i>
1676	0	0	Ottomans defeated at Lwow, victorious at Zurawno; peace of Zurawno gives Ottomans the Eastern Ukraine and Podolia <i>At this point, the Ottoman Empire reaches its maximum extent in Europe.</i>
1677	4	5	1677–81 first war with Russia over Ukraine
1678	4	12	
1679	24	32	
1680	23	27	
1681	21	26	Peace of Radzia; Ottomans give up Eastern Ukraine <i>First permanent loss of territory.</i>
1682	13	14	1682–99 war with Austria
1683	19	23	Second siege of Vienna
1684	14	14	Third Holy League (Venice and Poland join Austria); Visegrád, Vacz lost
1685	23	23	Last <i>dev irme</i> of note
1686	48	68	Fall of Buda; defeat at Zenta against Austria; Russia joins the coalition; Venetians in the Morea
1687	1	1	Ottomans lose Eger and the second Battle of Mohac against Austria; first Russian siege of Azov; army rebellion; deposition of Mehmed IV
1688	35	44	1687–91 Süleyman II; fall of Belgrade
1689	23	25	Austrians at Kosovo; Ottomans give up Szigetvar, Vidin, and Ni ; Russians attack the Crimea
1690	9	9	Ottomans defeat Austrians in Transylvania, recover Belgrade and Vidin
1691	0	0	1691–95 Ahmed II; tax reforms
1692	0	0	
1693	0	0	
1694	0	0	Gyula lost
1695	0	0	1695–1703 Mustafa II
1696	0	0	Ottoman counter-attack in Hungary, Lippa re-conquered; Azov lost to Russians
1697	0	0	Ottomans defeated again at Zenta
1698	0	0	

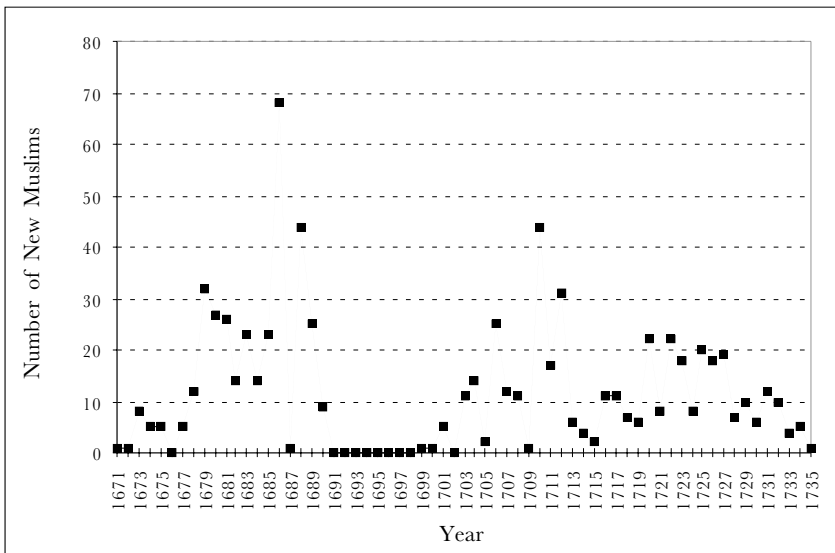
Table 9 (*cont.*)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Petitions</i>	<i>New Muslims</i>	<i>Major events</i>
1699	1	1	Treaty of Karlowitz: Poland recovers Podolia, Venice acquires the Morea and most of Dalmatia, Austria wins all of Hungary with the exception of the Banat of Temesvar
1700	1	1	
1701	5	5	
1702	0	0	
1703	11	11	Army rebellion; deposition of Mustafa II; 1703–30 Ahmed III
1704	13	14	
1705	2	2	
1706	21	25	
1707	12	12	
1708	11	11	
1709	1	1	
1710	35	44	1710–11 War with Russia
1711	13	17	Battle of Prut; Ottoman victory over Peter I
1712	31	31	
1713	6	6	Peace treaty with Russia; Azov recovered
1714	4	4	1714–18 war with Venice; recovery of the Morea
1715	2	2	Conquest of Tenos— <i>last Ottoman conquest</i>
1716	4	11	War with Austria; Ottomans defeated at Petrovaradin
1717	10	11	Fall of Belgrade
1718	7	7	Peace treaty of Passarowitz with Austria and Venice; Ottomans lose Banat of Temesvar and Little Wallachia (Oltenia)
1719	6	6	
1720	15	22	Great circumcision festival in Istanbul
1721	8	8	
1722	21	22	
1723	14	18	1723–27 war with Iran; Ottoman occupation of Azerbaijan and Hamadan
1724	7	8	
1725	16	20	
1726	14	18	
1727	16	19	
1728	6	7	
1729	6	10	

Table 9 (cont.)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Petitions</i>	<i>New Muslims</i>	<i>Major events</i>
1730	4	6	Patrona Halil rebellion; deposition of Ahmed III; end of Tulip period
1731	12	12	1730–54 Mahmud I
1732	10	10	
1733	4	4	
1734	5	5	
1735	1	1	
Total	636	755	

A perhaps clearer view of the above data can be had from the following graph.



Graph 4. Relative rate of new Muslims who petitioned the Sultan, 1672–1734

Seven hundred and fifty-five new Muslims over the course of sixty four years—an average of twelve per year—may not sound like a significant figure when compared to the Balkan non-Muslim population of more than two million at the turn of the seventeenth cen-

ture.² The six hundred and thirty six petitions submitted by these individuals, however, represent a statistically significant amount in terms of historical records from this period. We also have to bear in mind that of all archival materials once produced, those which have survived into modern times most likely form only a small fraction; this applies to the new Muslims' petitions as well.

Evidence that the petitions at my disposal represent only the "tip of the iceberg" may be found in a document that accounts for treasury disbursements to new Muslims for the period *Cemaziilevvel* 1090-*Rebiülahır* 1091 (June 10, 1679–May 19, 1680).³ The document—essentially a register for the fiscal year—lists 379 new Muslims: 193 men, 146 women, 18 boys and 22 girls, each given 1200, 2170, 700 and 1000 *akçes* respectively as the equivalent of a set of Muslim clothes (*kisve bahası*). As pointed out in my textual analysis of the petitions in chapter four, the *kisve bahası* could only be released after an administrative procedure initiated by the submission of a petition on the part of the new Muslim. Therefore, on the basis of this register we can conclude that there may have been as many as 379 new Muslims who petitioned the sultan in fiscal year 1679–1680. By contrast, I have found only 44 actual petitions submitted by 55 new Muslims (15 percent of the new Muslims listed in the register), dating from the same twelve month period. Moreover, when we consider the fact that 21 of the 44 petitions, which were submitted in the names of 25 new Muslims, survived to our day only by virtue of having been attached to the fiscal register, the actual survival rate drops to a mere 8 percent. This, of course, is only an observation of the low rate of survival of archival material in the case of one collection and should not in any way be interpreted as applicable to the survival rate of documents from this period in other collections.

In another document, we find an accounting of the treasury expenses for 44 new Muslims (29 men, 14 women and 1 boy) in the month of *Rebiülevvel* 1099 (January 6–February 4, 1688).⁴ It can be observed that the figure of forty-four new Muslims is slightly

² See chapter two, Table 7, for the figure of the *aiçye*-paying population. I am using a multiplier of 3.5 to arrive at the figure of two million.

³ 1\10817, f. 1b–2b. See for facsimile and full translation, Appendix 1, Document 15.

⁴ CG 80\13, f. 28.

higher even than most of the monthly figures in the register of 1679–1680.⁵ Therefore, we can estimate the number of new Muslims who petitioned the sultan in the 1687–88 fiscal year as being, if not higher, then at least no smaller than the figure for 1679–80. However, since all 35 petitions submitted in the names of those 44 new Muslims were attached to the document in question, there is not a single separately-preserved petition from the rest of the year. My conclusion, in light of this evidence, is that the actual number of petitions submitted in the period 1670s–1730s may have amounted to several thousand.

One wonders even more about the statistical value of the *kisve bahası* petitions when looking at the wide variation in the number of petitions submitted every year. According to the data tabulated above, there are no documents in my database issued in the years 1676, 1691 to 1698, and 1702. On the other hand, the years 1679, 1686, 1688, 1710 and 1712 all feature more than twice the annual average of surviving petitions. How do we account for the gaps? Is it because, in fact, no new Muslims submitted petitions to the sultan? Or, is it simply because no *kisve bahası* petitions have survived from these years? Similar questions may be asked with regard to the higher number of petitions in particular years.

Let us assume that the variation in the number of surviving petitions reflects real life situations. In other words, we posit that no *kisve bahası* petitions were submitted in particular years, and as a corollary, we must assume that they were submitted in large numbers in other years. In this case, an explanation should be sought in the events that occurred in the years in question, events that may have led to an increase or decrease in the number of people seeking to convert before the sultan. However, it is difficult to link any deviations in the number of petitions in a particular year to any particular event, personality or trend in Ottoman history. For example, it can be observed that in the period 1678–1689, the rate of petitions per year is relatively high. Yet, this represents one of the most disastrous periods in Ottoman military and political history. A brief review of the period includes the loss of Eastern Ukraine (1681), the

⁵ The monthly figures for fiscal year 1679–1680 are as follows: *Cemaziülevvel*- 22 new Muslims, *Cemaziülahur*- 32, *Receb*- 29, *aban*- 16, *Ramazan*- 34, *evval*- 21, *Zilkade*-42, *Zilhicce*- 24, *Muharrem*- 28, *Safer*- 40, *Rebiülevvel*- 28, *Rebiülahur*- 37. The remaining 25 new Muslims are listed as having been honored with Islam during a Royal hunt.

failure of the second Ottoman siege of Vienna (1683), the loss of Hungary to Austria, the fall of Belgrade (1688), the Austrian army advancing as far as Kosovo (1689), and Venice occupying the Morea (1686). In fact, the highest rates of petitions are observed in 1686 (48 petitions), the year when Buda fell, Russia joined the Holy League and Venice occupied the Morea, and in 1688 (35 petitions), the year of Belgrade's capture by Austrian forces.

However, in other years, which were also filled with humiliating setbacks for the Ottoman state, the number of surviving petitions is either very low or non-existent. This applies to 1687, when the Ottomans were defeated at the second battle of Mohac, when the army rose in rebellion and when Mehmed IV was deposed, as well as to the decade 1690–1699, which saw the defeat of the Ottoman army at Szalankamen and Zenta and the loss of Azov, Podolia and Dalmatia. Moreover, the rate of petitions rose again significantly between 1703 and 1720 when Ottoman political rebound fortunes were on the rise. In 1711, the Ottomans defeated Peter I at the battle of Prut and recovered Azov. In the 1714–18 war with Venice, they were able to reconquer the Morea, Corinth and the islands of Limnos and Tenedos. The first three decades of the eighteenth century also saw a period of cultural efflorescence—the so-called Tulip period. And yet, it must be acknowledged that there are individual years during this period of external military success for which we have few *kisve bahası* petitions, or even none at all.

Internal conditions and events in the empire do not seem to have influenced the rate of petitions either. For example, in 1687, the year of the deposition of Mehmed IV, the number of extant petitions amounts to 36. However, in 1703, the year of the deposition of Mustafa II, the rate of petitions is only 11. In 1691, the year of the *cizye* tax reforms, which were discussed in chapter three, reforms that should have contributed to the economic pressure on non-Muslim subjects, the rate of petitions is again zero.

In conclusion, it would appear that the variations in the rate of *kisve bahası* petitions in the period under consideration are more likely tied to the survival of documents in Ottoman archives and the dynamics of the Islamization process rather than any specific historical event.

Therefore, the statistical significance of *kisve bahası* petitions does not lie in the information they provide on how many non-Muslims converted in a particular year, as in the case of tax registers. If we

are to seek for the existence of a statistical value to *kisve bahası* petitions, it would be in their number representing a corpus of documents characteristic of a particular period of Ottoman history—the 1670s–1730s, as the record shows. Indeed, there is evidence that the practice of granting *kisve bahası* to new Muslims continued well into the nineteenth century.⁶ The petitions that have survived from this century and a half, however, are only eight in total—7 from 1847,⁷ and 1 from 1867.⁸ In my opinion, the near disappearance of the petitions after the 1730s from the Ottoman archives is a reflection of the overall decline of the conversion process. As pointed out in chapter two, the process ended in most of the Balkan lands after the first quarter of the eighteenth century and conversion was only sporadic in the nineteenth century.

In other words, the fact that the submission of petitions requesting *kisve bahası* or other favors from the sultan seems to have been a chronologically limited phenomenon and that such petitions may have amounted to several thousand, warrants our conclusion that the submission of petitions was a social phenomenon in the period 1670s–1730s.

At the same time however, it needs to be pointed out that the practice of rewarding new Muslims and of the latter trying to associate themselves with prominent Muslims, can hardly have started in the 1670s. Rather, we can safely assume that the Ottomans only institutionalized an already existing custom, dating perhaps from early Islamic times. An inquiry into the origins and institutionalization of the practice would be useful, therefore, in identifying the main characteristics of the *kisve bahası* phenomenon.

Islamic Tradition and Kisve Bahası Petitions

It seems that in the instance of *kisve bahası* petitions, we actually have three older Islamic practices combined into one: 1) association of converts with Muslims of higher social standing; 2) documentation of compliance with the formal steps necessary for conversion to Islam;

⁶ See 1A\57433; 1A\6861; OAK 78\41; OAK 43\17.

⁷ OAK 94\74, 1–6; OAK 50\94.

⁸ NPTA XIX 2\107.

and 3) rewarding the new Muslims financially or through the gift of new clothes. Let us address more fully each of these elements in turn.

1) The practice of a convert's associating himself with a prominent Muslim most probably had its origins in the institution of contractual patronage in early Islam—*wal al-muw l t*.⁹ Although anybody could serve as the person, "in whose hands" the convert would testify to his new creed, the latter did desire guidance and patronage in his/her new life. Most often, the role of exemplar was filled by recognized pious Muslims. The institution of *wal al-muw l t* established a special bond—a "fictitious kinship" in the words of Hallaq¹⁰—between converts and their patrons, as the former became clients (*maw l*) of the latter. The pious Muslims, on the other hand, acted as benefactors to their clients. It was natural then for converts to seek the patronage of wealthier or socially advantaged Muslims, who would provide them with a greater degree of assistance. One of the earliest examples of this tendency may be found in an anecdote recorded in one of the biographical dictionaries:

S l said to Yaz d b. al-Muhallab at the time Jurjan was conquered: 'Is there in Islam someone more illustrious than you at whose hands I might convert to Islam?' Yaz d replied: 'Yes, Sulaym n b. Abd al-Malik [caliph 715–717].' S l said: 'then dispatch me to him so I can convert to Islam at his hands.' So he did. When S l arrived, he said to Sulaym n what he had said to Yaz d. Then Sulaym n said: 'There is not now among the Muslims anyone more illustrious than I, but the tomb of the Messenger of God . . . has more.' Then I shall convert to Islam there,' said S l. So Sulaym n sent him to Madina, and he converted to Islam at the tomb. Then he returned to Yaz d b. al-Muhallab and became his companion and managed his expenditures until Maslamah b. Abd al-Malik killed him on the day of al-Aqr when he killed Yaz d b. al-Muhallab.¹¹

Contractual patronage was not recognized by any of the four Islamic schools of law except the Hanafi.¹² However, by virtue of Hanafi

⁹ *Wal al-muw l t* should be distinguished from *wal al-itq*, which arises from slavery. See Wael Hallaq, "The Use and Abuse of Evidence: The Question of Provincial and Roman Influences on Early Islamic Law," *JIOS*, 1 (1990), 84.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹ Cited by Bulliet, "Stories," 125.

¹² *Ibid.*, 83.

school's being the official school of law observed in the Ottoman empire, it is only natural that we should look for the legacy of *wal al-muw l t* in this realm. It has to be admitted that the *wal al-muw l t* contract does not necessarily involve conversion, nor does it have to be concluded at all, since such a contract is held to be permissible (*j iz*), not obligatory (*l zim*).¹³ Second, the contract presumes equality between the parties so that support in financial and moral matters should be mutual.¹⁴ The latter can hardly be said of the "sultan-convert" relationship reflected in *kisve bahası* petitions. In other words, there can be no direct comparison between the *wal al-muw l t* contract and *kisve bahası* petitions in a strictly legal sense. The connection between the two is primarily conceptual. In my opinion, the institution of contractual patronage must have gradually become part of the social norms of Muslim society in dealing with newcomers in the Muslim community. As such, some of the legal characteristics of the institution became blurred and were replaced by patterns of social behavior. For example, *kisve bahası* petitions are definitely not contracts in view of their diplomatic features. Nevertheless, one cannot escape the feeling that the new Muslims who petitioned the sultan thought in terms of bargaining. Their part of the bargain was to show genuine belief in Islam and to appeal to the sultan showing all the due respect of eager religious novices and obedient subjects. In some petitions, an element of offer is clearly pronounced.¹⁵ In return, the new Muslims expected the sultan's patronage and certain favors as established by custom. That the sultan regarded the petitions with the sense of an obligation to fulfill his part of the contract is also apparent from the meticulous recording in the margins of the documents of the amounts and/or positions granted to the petitioners.

Another feature of the *wal al-muw l t* contract—that the client is not supposed to have a natal group—also manifested itself in the practice of *kisve bahası* petitions.¹⁶ As will be pointed out below, a significant number of the new Muslims who submitted petitions to

¹³ See *ibid.*, 84 and the sources given there.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See especially NPTA XX 1\28, f. 26 (Appendix 1, Document 6).

¹⁶ According to Hallaq, such a contract was specifically designed to provide for those non-Muslims who do not have existing relationships—see Hallaq, "Use and Abuse," 85.

the sultan, belonged to this category. Moreover, in some cases an effort seems to have been made on the part of the petitioner to appear to conform to such a criterion.¹⁷

2) With regard to the documenting of conversion, it should be pointed out that in early Islam the practice was not accompanied by a ritual or sacramental performance equivalent to baptism, nor was any registration or documentary proof of change of religion demanded. The formal process of conversion was simply limited to the pronunciation of the *ahadet* (Ar. *shah da*).¹⁸ Consequently, little was expected spiritually or intellectually of the early converts to Islam.¹⁹ Nevertheless, according to Bulliet, a change in the character of conversion occurred in the tenth (fourth Islamic) century when conversion came to be regarded also as a matter of belief.²⁰ In addition to being a socio-political challenge, conversion began to pose a spiritual challenge as well. However, it was not until conversion became also a matter of legal interest—the latter being often the case with changes in marital status or proprietorship rights—that these new formal requirements came to be written down. The jurists established a set of guidelines to be followed in deciding when a conversion would be deemed legally valid and began issuing conversion certificates. According to judicial models of conversion certificates from tenth-century Spain, the necessary elements of conversion included: 1) a statement of sound mental health; 2) a statement of conversion to Islam and rejection of one's former religion, both undertaken voluntarily; 3) reciting the *ahadet*; 4) undertaking to fulfill the different duties imposed on a Muslim; and 5) a record of the witnesses to the conversion.²¹

The strict observance of all of the above legal procedures or their precise reproduction in non-legal documents, such as *kisve bahası* petitions can hardly have been expected. Nevertheless, if we look at the petitions' superstructure, which was described in schematic form in chapter four, one can see that the elements of the "novice-caliph" relationship set are very similar to those described above. The entity

¹⁷ See especially 1A\57265 (Appendix 1, Document 8).

¹⁸ Bulliet, "Stories," 129 and idem, *Conversion*, 33.

¹⁹ Bulliet, "Stories," 132.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Shatzmiller, "Marriage," 238.

designated “enlightenment” in the petition’s superstructure pertains to the convert’s inner experience, and as such it indicates the voluntary nature of the latter’s decision. “Renouncement of former religion” comes next, as in the case of conversion certificates. “Embracing Islam” includes the pronouncement of the Muslim creed and the adoption of a Muslim name. Finally, “being honored with Islam” points to the new Muslim being taught the articles of faith and the conversion taking place in the presence of the sultan.

Again, I argue that the close similarity between the steps of conversion described in *kisve bahası* petitions and in the model conversion certificates is due to the transformation of these steps from legal to moral categories. Eventually, Muslim society came to perceive genuine conversion in terms of the established moral norms, just as new Muslims came to conform to such expectations. Therefore, documentation of certain formal steps in one’s conversion, even in a non-legal document, although not necessarily from a legal point of view, was justified in light of expected social behavior.

3) The third important aspect of *kisve bahası* petitions is the financial reward that was offered to new Muslims upon conversion. I did not find any evidence as to when this practice first began. Most likely, though, it did not derive from some early Islamic legal practice, as was the case with the other two aspects of *kisve bahası* petitions. As is evident from the “legal grounds for request” component of the petition’s superstructure, the new Muslims, like the Ottoman financial authorities in their endorsements, refer in their petitions exclusively to sultanic law (*kanun*) or to established custom (*mutad*, *adet*). Islamic law (*eriat*) is never mentioned. Moreover, although the three terms—*adet*, *mutad* and *kanun*—seem to be used quite interchangeably in the petitions, the overall impression is that the term *kanun* was used increasingly more often after 1700 than the other two. A probable reason for this usage may have been the issuance of a formal edict of the sultan regarding new Muslims around this date. The edict may have consequently been included in the *kanunnames*²² and would thus have become a law, to which the new Muslims might have referred as legal precedent in the petitions.

²² Uzunçar ılı mentions the existence of a certain *Kanun-i nev müslim* in the *kanunnames* without, however, specifying the date or giving a reference to the particular *kanunname* (Uzunçar ılı, *Merkez*, 28).

Nevertheless, I am reluctant to attribute the origins of the practice of granting *kisve bahası* solely to the Ottoman period. After all, a theological justification for the special treatment of a convert to Islam is found in a passage of the Quran, Surah 28, which may be interpreted in the sense that such a person deserves a reward for discerning the true faith in spite of the errors in his upbringing:

51. Those unto whom We gave the Scripture before it [the Quran], they believe in it.

52. And when it is recited unto them, they say: We believe in it. Lo! It is the Truth from our Lord. Lo! We were Muslims before this.

53. These will be given their reward twice over, because they are steadfast and repel evil with good, and spend of that wherewith We have provided them.²³

Furthermore, as Bulliet observes, “given the plethora of early restrictions on the costume of non-Muslims and frequent indication of name changing upon conversion, it seems likely that these were the most apparent indicators of conversion to Islam.”²⁴ Therefore, we may expect that a new set of clothes may have been given in the event of a conversion’s being made public, as in the case of *kisve bahası* petitions. Indeed, in the account of the traveler Schiltberger, who described how a Christian became Muslim in fifteenth-century Anatolia, we find the practice of giving clothes and gifts to a convert already an established custom.

When a Christian wants to become an Infidel, he must before all men raise a finger, and say the words: “La il lach illallah”; Machmet is his true messenger. And when he says this, they take him to the high priest; then he must repeat the above written words before the priest, and must deny the Christian faith, and when he has done that, they put on him a new dress, and the priest binds a new kerchief on his head; and this they do that it may be seen he is an infidel, because Christians wear blue kerchiefs, and the Jews, yellow kerchiefs, on the head. Then the priest asks all the people to put on their armour, and who has to ride, rides; also all the priests who are in the neighborhood. And when the people come, they put him on a horse, and then the common people must ride before him, and the priests go behind him, with trumpets, cymbals and fifes, and two priests ride near him;

²³ Surah 28 from *The Glorious Qur'an*, explanatory translation by Mohammad M. Pickthall (Chicago, 1994), 408.

²⁴ Bulliet, “Stories,” 130.

and so they lead him about in the town; and the Infidels cry with a loud voice and praise Machmet, and the two priests say to him these words: “Thary wirdur, Messe chulidur, Maria cara baschidur, Machmet kassuldur”: which is as much as to say; There is one God, and the Messiah his servant, Mary his maid, and Machmet his chief messenger. After they have led him everywhere in the city, from one street to another, then they lead him into the temple and circumcise him. If he is poor, they make a large collection and give it to him, and the great lords shew particular honor to him, and make him rich; this they do, that Christians may be more willing to be converted to their faith. If it is a woman who wants to change her religion, she is also taken to the high priest, and must say the above words. The priest then takes the woman’s girdle, cuts it in two, and makes of it a cross; on this, the woman must stamp three times, deny the Christian faith, and must say the other words above written.²⁵

The conversion ritual described by Schiltberger is also significant because it shows the fusion of all three practices at the folk-culture level already in the fifteenth century. Notwithstanding the interwoven folkloric elements, we can see the same formal steps described in the conversion certificates and in the *kisve bahası* petitions at the end of the seventeenth century. The convert is required to recite the Islamic creed. He must also deny his former faith and be given a basic knowledge of Muslim dogma. Next, the new Muslim is circumcised. Moreover, in the tradition of *wal al-muw l t*, he is taken into the presence of prominent Muslims, who honor him with their attention and make sure that he advances up the social ladder. More tangible rewards are also offered: the new Muslim is given a new set of clothes, to distinguish him from non-Muslims and an amount of money collected from among the members of his new community.

Institutionalization of Kisve Bahası Practice

However, fusion of the three practices in popular culture is quite a different thing from its being established as a streamlined administrative institution, as was the case with *kisve bahası* petitions at the end of the seventeenth century. The appearance of *kisve bahası* petitions in the last decades of the seventeenth century, on the other

²⁵ Cited by Vryonis, *Decline*, 357–358.

hand, may be regarded as the final stage in the institutionalization of the practices. Yet, how did they evolve into a state institution?

First, I argue that the fusion of the three Islamic practices accompanies a particular stage of Muslim society's development in any given area. As pointed out above, the formal steps of conversion and conversion ceremonies that appeared in the tenth century (fourth Islamic century) signified a marked change in the nature of conversion in the central Islamic lands. The impact of this development was that, as belief became a more prominent factor in conversion, resistance to the latter increased correspondingly. According to Bulliet, "the remnant [non-Muslim] communities were more successful in fending off Muslims who came to them with sermons than they had been in resisting the attractions of social assimilation to a ruling class that made few demands at the level of faith."²⁶ As a result, conversion tapered off.

The same process occurred in zones of fresh conversion, such as Anatolia and the Balkans, all over again.²⁷ It does not seem to me coincidental that the conversion ritual recorded by Schiltberger comes from the fifteenth century, which was when the "laggards" period started in Anatolia, i.e., the period when conversion was tapering off in this area.²⁸ It could be argued, therefore, on the basis of analogy with the development of the conversion process in the central Islamic lands,²⁹ that the fifteenth century was the period when religious beliefs became important in Anatolian Muslim society and thus led to the appearance of conversion ceremonies.

In the Balkans, it was observed that the early stages of the conversion process were also accompanied by religious syncretism.³⁰ The *fetwas* discussed in chapter three reveal that it was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that Muslim society began to demand more from its new members due to the growth of religious conservatism. It was also shown that conversion suddenly lost momentum

²⁶ Bulliet, "Stories," 132.

²⁷ See *ibid.* for similar observation with regard to Anatolia.

²⁸ See chapter one.

²⁹ It could be observed that the tenth century was the beginning of the "laggards period" in the process of conversion in the central Islamic lands. According to Bulliet, the "laggards" period started around 975 in Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Tunisia, one century earlier in Iran and one century later in Spain, due to a later conquest. See Bulliet, *Conversion*, *passim*.

³⁰ See chapter three.

in the Balkans at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Such developments help to explain the appearance of ceremonies and documentation of conversion in the second half of the seventeenth century. *Kisve bahası* petitions, therefore, may be regarded as documentary evidence for the introduction of elaborate religious procedures accompanying one's conversion to Islam in the Ottoman Empire of this period.

In addition to the religious side of the conversion, represented by the "caliph-novice" relationship embedded in the petitions' superstructure, there was also the material side, represented by the "subject-ruler" relationship set. The incorporation of the latter aspect in a conversion document was a new development—one that may have encouraged the institutionalization of the practice. One should not forget that the term *kisve bahası*, as used in the petitions, was as much related to a religious practice as it was to Ottoman accounting procedures. In the latter sense, the term was essentially a budgetary line item accounting for funds spent from the treasury on behalf of new Muslims. When exactly it entered the accounting books, however, is not clear. I argue that this might have happened in the second half of the seventeenth century as well—simultaneously with the transformation of conversion into a religious act.

In support of such a hypothesis, I discuss in the following pages several documents that reflect the practice of rewarding new Muslims with clothing and money and the accounting for these expenses by the treasury at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Seven of the documents are from the archive of the Prime Minister in Istanbul, dated January 3, 1610 (7 *evval* 1018), which record the expenses relating to ten new Muslims—five women and five men.³¹ An identical document, dated March 6, 1612 (3 *Muharrem* 1021) and relating to one new Muslim, is preserved in the archive of the National Library of Bulgaria.³² Another two, dated April 8 and May 24, 1616 (21 *Rebiülâhur* and 8 *Cemazülevvel* 1025) and relating to four new Muslims, are published by Uzunçar ılı.³³ The documents are written on very small pieces of paper in *siyakat* script. Their text begins with the phrase "according to the custom of new Muslims" (*adet-i nev müs-*

³¹ See BOA, Ali Emiri, Ahmed I, 757.

³² 1A\56303.

³³ Uzunçar ılı, *Merkez*, 29.

lim). Then, they list the new Muslim name(s) of the convert(s), their number (*neferen*), and the items given—invariably a turban cloth (*destar*) and 50 *akçes* in cash (*nakdiye*) per person in all the documents. On the margins of each of these documents we find an endorsement by the *ba defterdar*, a note from the *ba muhasebe* instructing that a Treasury bill of exchange (*tezkerre-i hazine*) be issued, and another note for registering the expense. I offer the following interpretation and comments on these documents.

1. The paper size, script and succinct language of these documents all indicate that they are of a strictly financial character and that their function was to serve as an inter-departmental exchange of information. In my opinion, they relate to the Ottoman chancery genre known as *kaime*.³⁴ The latter was a document used by all financial departments to notify the department of the *ba muhasebe* that a Treasury bill (*tezkerre-i hazine*) needed to be issued.
2. As is evident from the inscriptions on the margins of the documents, which are similar to those observed in the case of *kisve bahası* petitions, the bureaucratic procedure for rewarding new Muslims at the end of the seventeenth century was already in place at its beginning.
3. Moreover, the usage of the word “custom” in the documents means that distributing presents and cash to new Muslims was already an established tradition by the seventeenth century.
4. However, the documents also reveal that at the beginning of the seventeenth century the treasury could reward new Muslims with money only on special occasions. The inscription “during the sacred feast” (*der iyd-i erif*) to be observed in one of the documents³⁵ shows that the expenses accounted for were associated with festive occasions during which almsgiving by members of the imperial family would occur. By contrast, during the last decades of the seventeenth century, new Muslims were accepted and rewarded in the palace on a daily basis. For example, in the

³⁴ See for this genre Velkov, *Vidove*, 112–117.

³⁵ BOA, Ali Emiri, Ahmed I, 757, f. 1.

register of 1679–80 for the expenses of new Muslims, we can observe the dates of conversion in the royal presence of the 22 new Muslims rewarded in the month of *Cemaziülevel*. The figures, broken down by date, are as follows: on the 5th—1 new Muslim; on the 7th—2; on the 12th—1; on the 14th—1; on the 15th—2; on the 21st—3; on the 22nd—2; on the 27th—1; on the 29th—2; and on the 30th day of the month—7.³⁶ There is no breakdown by date for the rest of the year. However, it may be observed that the number of new Muslims registered in most of the months exceeded the number of days in those months.³⁷ Thus, it is likely that conversions in the royal quarters occurred at an even more frequent rate than the case observed above.

5. Most importantly, nowhere do we find the terms *kisve* or *kisve bahası* per se used in these documents. Instead, they mention the word “*aide*” (gift).³⁸ This fact, first of all, reaffirms the above observation about the occasional nature of the rewards. Second, “*aide*” stands in contrast to the terminology used later when the practice of submitting *kisve bahası* petitions was established. Nor can the absence of the term *kisve bahası* be attributed to the fact that these documents were issued as follow-ups to the initial order. It should be pointed out that in the period 1670s–1730s, the term *kisve bahası* was invariably used not only in petitions but in their follow-up documents as well. The latter would typically start with “*beray baha-i kisve-i nev müslim*” or simply “*baha-i kisve-i nev müslim*” ([expenses] for the equivalent of a new Muslim’s clothes. . . .” The coining of a special chancery term containing the word *baha* shows that the practice was routinized, while the word *kisve*, a symbol of the act of conversion, as its adjective, demonstrates the importance of religious values in the practice of *kisve bahası* petitions.

To summarize, the eight documents show that all elements of the material side of the *kisve bahası* practice were in place as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, including the notion of rewarding new Muslims, the involvement of the royal family (and thus, the

³⁶ 1\10817, f. 1b.

³⁷ See note 4 above.

³⁸ 1A\56303. The endorsement of the *ba defterdar* reads—*mezbur aidesi virile* (give to the aforementioned his gift).

use of money from the state treasury to pay for the rewards), and finally, the financial procedures for accounting for such an expense. Nevertheless, neither the regular practice of admitting new Muslims into the palace and giving them reward-money nor the term *kisve bahası* itself existed at the time. The amalgamation of the “ritual” and “material” sides of conversion in that practice was only made possible when the act of conversion became not only an expression of social accommodation but an act of religious significance as well. As I argue above, this may not have happened until the last decades of the seventeenth century.

In my opinion, there were two more developments in seventeenth-century Ottoman society that helped to transform the practice of rewarding new Muslims into an institution. As observed in chapter four, according to the petitions, it was also customary for new Muslims who converted at the hands of other Ottoman dignitaries to submit petitions so that the *kisve bahası* might be paid to them. Such a practice is not unfamiliar to Islamic society. According to Islamic law, a non-Muslim converted at the hands of one Muslim may simultaneously enter into a *wal al-muw l t* contract with another Muslim.³⁹ However, the existence of a legal clause justifying a simultaneous contract does not explain why the latter was so widespread in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire. The payments to new Muslims, who converted at the hands of Muslims other than the sultan, with money from the public treasury, constituted in effect an appropriation of state money by the nomenklatura to cover expenses formerly considered personal. Such a development indicates that the practice of rewarding new Muslims was transformed from an expression of personal piety and generosity into a state institution. The change was not coincidental. As shown in chapter three, the third period in the evolution of the *dev irme* institution—i.e., the *dev irmes*’ total monopoly of power—was one in which state property had been transformed into *de facto* nomenklatura property, a trend that had emerged at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The appearance of the *kisve bahası* practice is simply further evidence for the Ottoman elite becoming an embodiment of the state itself and the public treasury being treated as the private purse of the former.

³⁹ See Hallaq, “Use and Abuse,” 84.

Most probably, however, it was not the financial gains that motivated the nomenklatura to change the established customs of rewarding new Muslims. In my opinion, this came about as a result of the changes within the *dev irme* institution itself. One of the latter's characteristic features during the period under consideration was its reliance on the internal promotion of family members and protégés, rather than regular levies drawn from the *reaya*. By having converts-cum-protégés considered as clients of the crown and consequently rewarded with public funds and appointments, the nomenklatura essentially transformed a religious custom into an important instrument of institutional strength—indeed, into an institution by itself. For example, in a document, dated 1663, it is mentioned that the 252 vacant Janissary positions in the *Cebeci* corps were filled by palace servants (*emekdar*), sons of Janissaries (*kulo lu*) and new Muslims (*nev müslim*).⁴⁰

It would be difficult to argue, however, that all *kisve bahası* petitions were submitted by protégés of the nomenklatura. It is very likely that the widespread incidents of new Muslims being rewarded with money, and especially with appointments, initiated a chain reaction in the lower classes of Ottoman society as well. As pointed out in chapter three, the desire for social advancement was a major factor, one that often motivated members of the *reaya* to convert to Islam. The cornerstone for such motivation was the prosperity of the *reaya*-born, *dev irme*-raised elite. With the regular collection of *reaya* children for the Janissary corps ending in the middle of the seventeenth century, however, social pressure may have accumulated within the lower classes for finding other avenues of social mobility. *Reaya* members, aspiring to the status of Janissary, or simply needing the money to find a way out of dire financial straits, may have seized the opportunity offered by the institutionalized practice of rewarding new Muslims for accepting Islam. The lower classes' active role in the shaping of the practice of *kisve bahası* finds its expression in the latter's ultimately taking the form of petition-submitting, which was the only means available to the masses of communicating their wishes.

⁴⁰ See .H. Uzunçar ılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Te kilatından Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. 2 (Ankara, 1944), 6.

Summary

1. The institution of *kisve bahası* emerged in the second half of the seventeenth century and constituted a social phenomenon in the period 1670s–1730s in particular. Although related to earlier Islamic practices, which, as a rule, manifested themselves at a particular stage in the development of the process of conversion, the *kisve bahası* institution pertains also to the unique social situation in the Ottoman Empire of the seventeenth century.
2. The institution consisted of voluntary conversions to Islam, taking place on an almost daily basis in the palace, in the presence of the sultan or other high-ranking state dignitaries, and of the granting of money, known as *kisve bahası*, and low-rank positions to the new Muslims, who were considered as a result of the conversion to be clients of the crown. The elaborate administrative procedure for the release of funds from the public treasury was also an integral part of the institution. The new Muslims' petitions to the sultan, written before or after the conversion ceremony, were an expression of the formers' active position in seeking royal favor. The petitions were, at the same time, written evidence of the combination of spiritual and material aspects of conversion along with Ottoman bureaucratic efficiency in the institution of the *kisve bahası*.
3. From the point of view of the nomenklatura, the *kisve bahası* institution was a mechanism for advancing protégés, a mechanism that replaced the system of child collection used in previous centuries for filling the ranks of the Janissary corps. From the point of view of the masses, the *kisve bahası* institution was a better alternative to *dev îme* levies as a mechanism for social advancement, or simply personal welfare, by virtue of its entirely voluntary nature.

CHAPTER SIX

THE COLLECTIVE IMAGE OF NEW MUSLIMS WHO SUBMITTED *KISVE BAHASI* PETITIONS TO THE SULTAN, 1670s–1730s

Prosopography and the “Database Management System” Method of Analysis

In chapter five, our analysis of the petitions was based on the superstructure’s data fields as combined in relationship sets rather than on the information controlled by each data field. Our conclusions, therefore, tended to be somewhat general—they were relevant to conversion as a process in the period 1670s–1730s and to the place of the phenomenon of *kisve bahasi* petitions in it. The purpose of such an approach was to put the petitioners’ personalities in their appropriate social context. Nevertheless, as pointed out in chapter four, the value of the *kisve bahasi* petitions’ superstructure and the “database systems” method of analysis to the historian lies in their ability to provide a “view” level of analysis, i.e., to channel information accumulated in the database of petitions, through the medium of the superstructure’s data fields. One of the possible “views” is of the data relevant to the personalities of the petitioners.

Having such data for several hundred new Muslims who submitted *kisve bahasi* petitions to the sultan naturally raises the prospect of writing a prosopographic or group biography survey of those people as a social group. Prosopography is a new approach to Ottoman historiography. According to Metin Kunt, prosopography is used to study, by means of biographical data, “a specific group in terms of, for example, its position in society, its function, its importance, its political or economic power, and its role in social or political change.”¹ This method has only been utilized so far to study social groups in the Ottoman upper stratum—the ulema² and the military

¹ Kunt, *Sultan’s Servants*, xvi.

² N. Itzkowitz and Joel Shinder, “The Office of *‘eyh ül- sl m* and the Tanzimat—A Prosopographic Enquiry,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 8 (1972), 94–101; Suraiya Faroqhi,

elite.³ The construction of a collective image of a social group within the masses, therefore, would be a substantial contribution to Ottoman social history by itself. With regard to conversion in Ottoman times, the collective portrait of the petitioners will help identify the characteristics they shared that led them to convert to Islam.

Social Status

In general, the social status of the petitioners is described by the use of the words *kul*, or *cariye* for a woman, found in the "identity" field of the petition's superstructure. However, the term *kul*, as used in the petitions, can hardly be translated as "nomenklaturchik," as argued earlier in connection with its use to designate the status of Janissary. As pointed out in chapter four, *kul* and *cariye* were terms used by people coming from all strata of society when addressing the sultan, including the military class and the elite, because all Ottoman subjects were considered the sultan's slaves/servants. The most appropriate translation in the case of *kisve bahası* petitions, therefore, may be simply "subject."

Nevertheless, in a handful of petitions a degree of social stratification among the petitioners can be attested. The information in their "identity" field reveals the petitioners to have possessed a higher-than-average level of skills and knowledge and to have enjoyed a higher social standing in their respective communities. In return for their conversion, those petitioners usually requested positions that could maintain or raise their social prestige. We can cite here as an example a petition by a Jew, who, being trained in the craft of metal purifying, requested an appointment as head of the state mint,⁴ and others by petitioners requesting positions as surgeons in the hospital of the Janissary corps.⁵ Another petitioner stated in his request that

"Social Mobility and the Ottoman Ulema in the Later Sixteenth Century," *IJMES*, 4 (1973), 204-18; Ali U ur, "The Ottoman Ulem in the Mid-seventeenth Century: An Analysis of the Vak i ül-Fuzal of Mehmed eyhi Efendi" (Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh University, 1973).

³ N. Itzkowitz, "Eighteenth Century Ottoman Realities," *SI*, 16 (1963), 73-94; R.A. Abou El-Haj, "Households;" idem, *Rebellion*; Kunt, *Sultan's Servants*.

⁴ NPTA XX 1\28 f. 26. See Appendix 1, Document 6.

⁵ CG 34\2, f. 3; 1A\57279.

he was already employed as an interpreter (*dragoman*) of Serbian.⁶ One of the most interesting petitions in this group is that of a priest, converted to Islam, who stated that he was “from the educated people” and desired that his social standing be maintained after the conversion through an appointment in the palace, suited to his qualifications.⁷

In addition to direct statements, the higher social standing of some new Muslims may be revealed also by the “reward” data field. It can be observed that in all the cases mentioned above, the petitioners were rewarded with a luxury set of clothes (*mükemmel kisve*) or its cash value. Therefore, I assume that in other petitions that do not specify the social position of the new Muslim but simply request the granting of a luxury set of clothes, the convert must have been deemed worthy of such a reward by virtue of his social standing. If we accept the criterion of a luxury vs. an ordinary set of clothes as sound, this would enlarge our pool of petitioners enjoying a higher social standing within their former communities to 10—representing 1.3 percent of the total number of petitioners. It may be observed that this figure is very insignificant when compared to the 745 new Muslims who received ordinary sets. However, until more comprehensive research on the non-Muslim cultural and economic elite becomes available, I am reluctant to conclude that educated or skilled non-Muslims were less likely to convert to Islam in the period under consideration. The figure of 1.3 percent may well be representative for the stage of elite formation among the non-Muslim community at the time. For example, according to a study by Hupchick, the seventeenth-century Bulgarian cultural elite included a mere 138 individuals deserving to be counted among the literary intelligentsia and artists, and 158 cultural patrons, i.e., economically well enough endowed to sponsor cultural activities.⁸ Compared to an estimated Bulgarian-speaking population of 759,780 in the late seventeenth century,⁹ such figures are rather insignificant and scarcely positing the existence of a sizable non-Muslim elite at the time.

⁶ 1\11066, f. 1.

⁷ 1A\6806. See Appendix 1, Document 9.

⁸ Dennis Hupchick, *The Bulgarians in the Seventeenth Century: Slavic Orthodox Society and Culture under Ottoman Rule* (Jefferson, London, 1993), Appendix II: Statistical Tables, Table 21–26.

⁹ Grozdanova, *Narodnost*, 697.

The rural or urban origins of the petitioners may serve as another criterion of their social status. If we take petitioners' rural origins as indicating their peasant background and urban origins as pointing to their non-agrarian occupations, the following division emerges. In the 44 petitions that mention the geographic origins of the petitioner, 23 (52.3 percent) specify either the region or the district in general, or give the name of a village as their original residence. The remaining 21 petitions—47.7 percent—specify the petitioner as a resident of a town or a city. Occasionally, among those in the latter group, individual vocations, such as craftsmen or merchant, are also made apparent.¹⁰ It may be observed that the share of urban residents looks rather significant when compared to the overall proportion of the Ottoman population living in urban areas at the end of the seventeenth century—less than 10 percent. Moreover, it should also be pointed out that residents of Istanbul or its environs account for almost one half of the urban dwellers who submitted petitions to the sultan—42.9 percent. In other words, it may have been more likely for urban residents engaged in non-agricultural activities to convert through the *kısve bahası* institution than rural residents.

Age, Gender, Marital status

Other important demographic information, found also in the “identity” field, includes the petitioners' age, gender and marital status. In view of the close relations of these three characteristics of the petitioners, I will discuss them together.

As pointed out in chapter four, distinction in the age of the petitioners is made only between adults and adolescents. The overwhelming majority of the petitioners—636 (84.2 percent)—in my database are adults, while the adolescents account for only 119 (15.8 percent).

With regard to the gender of the petitioners in my database, it is men—611 (80.9 percent)—who constitute the majority of the new Muslims who submitted petitions to the sultan. The age division in this category is 542 adults and 69 youths. Based on the requests of some of the young men, my impression is that a significant number

¹⁰ See OAK 76\52, f. 30, NPTA XX 1\28 f. 26, 1\11111, f. 1.

of them were actually in the *gulam* age category (12–20 years), i.e., mature enough to be enrolled as pages. The female petitioners number 144 (19.1 percent)—94 adult women and 50 girls—some of them possibly also close to adulthood. However, most of the youths—78 (65.5 percent)—are mentioned in the petitions along with their parent(s), who is (are) the primary petitioner(s). Still, a significant share—41 (34.5 percent or 5.4 percent of the total petitioners)—of the youths are the primary petitioners.

When looking at the breakdown of the petitioners by gender, it is the number of females that I consider to be most surprising. In my opinion, the figures of almost 20 percent women petitioners and 82 percent of these primary petitioners (the other 18 percent are mentioned alongside their husbands), are rather significant for a male-dominated society. Evidence for even larger representation of women among petitioners is found in the register of treasury expenditure for the new Muslims who submitted petitions to the sultan in 1679–80, discussed above in chapter five. The females' share (146 women and 22 girls)—44.3 percent of the total of 379 new Muslims listed in the register—is almost equal to that of males, i.e., 211 (55.7 percent).

Divided by marital status, the overwhelming majority of the adult petitioners—85.1 percent—fall into the category of singles. There are 525 single-male (69.5 percent) and 77 (10.2 percent) single-female petitioners, including those with children. It is also likely that most of the 41 youths (5.4 percent) who are primary petitioners may have been old enough to be included in the singles category. The remaining 112 (14.9 percent) petitioners are children (9.1 percent) listed in the petitions with their single parents and married couples with children (5.8 percent). Of the 150 petitioners (19.9 percent) who submitted petitions as families—56 families in all—39 families (70 percent) belong to the category of single-parent family. Thus only 17 families (30 percent) numbering 44 people (5.8 percent of the total petitioners)—34 adults and 10 children—fall into the category of two-parent families. Among the single-parent families, there are 10 single-father families (19 percent), numbering 38 people (5 percent of the total petitioners), and 29 single-mother families (51 percent), accounting for 69 petitioners (9.1 percent of the total).

The fact that most of the new Muslims who converted through the *kisve bahası* institution were single is not surprising. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the *kisve bahası* institution owed at least part of its origin in the institution of contractual patronage (*wal*

al-muw l t), which was designed for people without a natal group. On the one hand, there are only a few petitions that explicitly refer to the new Muslim as an orphan,¹¹ as an elderly person left without support,¹² or as someone somehow disconnected from his community.¹³ On the other hand, in view of the fact that most of the petitioners were arriving in the capital from the provinces and desired to stay there, they may have been considered as uprooted and therefore, especially deserving of the sultan's favor. An interesting case, meriting special attention, is the petition in which one new Muslim declares his adherence to the faith of Islam and requests an appointment in the *cebeci* corps. Below the petition, there is another line added by a different hand and in poor Turkish, possibly by the new Muslim himself, stating that he is an orphan and disabled.¹⁴ While we can accept the possibility of the petitioner being an orphan, it is highly unlikely that a disabled person could expect to receive an army appointment. In my opinion, the addition was made only in order to give the new Muslim's request more legitimacy in the eyes of the sultan.

While it is not possible to prove that most of the petitioners belonged to a socially weak group in the eyes of society, such as orphans and the elderly (and probably most of them did not), the fact that most of the female petitioners fell into the category of widow is apparent. We find that only 17 adult women (18 percent) converted with their husbands, whereas the rest were either single mothers—29 (31 percent)—and most of them probably widows, or merely single women—48 (51 percent)—many of whom are clearly identified as widows as well. In chapter three, marriage was discussed as being highly relevant to a woman's decision to convert to Islam. Widowhood, therefore, adds a new dimension to the study of women's conversion to Islam, one that deserves more attention from social historians. That the phenomenon of widows' conversion to Islam was widespread in Ottoman society at the time may be attested by the high number of widows registered as "daughters of Abdullah" in villages with mixed population in the *avariz* register of 1723 for the

¹¹ 1\10981, f. 1; 1\57265; 1A\57319, f. 52.

¹² 1\6815, f. 1; NPTA XX 1\28, f. 2.

¹³ OAK 17\18, f. 1; 1\11107; 1\11111.

¹⁴ 1A\57265, f. 1. See Appendix 1, Document 8.

kaza of Nevrokop, mentioned in chapter three. For example,¹⁵ there were 4 “daughters of Abdullah,” out of 11 widows in the village of Vezne, 5 out of 14 in the village of Kornıçe, 6 out of 7 in the village of Bukova, 2 out of 5 in the village of Ribne, 3 out of 5 in the village of Ore e, etc.

Name

According to the *kisve bahası* petitions’ superstructure, the new Muslim’s name was an essential part of his “new Muslim identity” field. As was pointed out in chapter four, the name of the new Muslim is found in the signature affixed to the petitions. Most *kisve bahası* petitions, however, are signed with the impersonal *bende* ([your] servant), *nev müslim* (new Muslim) or *bende-i nev müslim* (your servant, the new Muslim), all of which are relevant to the “new Muslim” status of the convert. Only in a very few petitions do we encounter a name—a new, Muslim one, or a former name—signed in full. As far as the Muslim names are concerned, the ones most often encountered are Süleyman, Mustafa, Ahmed, Ali, Osman, Hüseyin, Mehmed, brahim, and Abdullah for men, and Fatime and Ai e for women. Although it is interesting that most of the male names are those of the Ottoman sultans of the period,¹⁶ yet with only two exceptions¹⁷ they do not correspond to the ruling sultan at the time of the petition.

One cannot escape the observation that the onomasticon found in new Muslims’ petitions corresponds to the one observed by Bulliet among converts in the central Islamic lands during the advanced stages of the conversion process. The five distinctively Muslim names—Ahmed, Ali, Mehmed, Hasan and Hüseyin—enjoy the greatest popularity, while Biblical/Quranic names such as Süleyman and Ibrahim are of lesser popularity. Pre-Islamic names, of Turkic origin in our case, are not encountered at all. The only name in the petitions not found in Bulliet’s account—the name Abdullah—became popular among converts only in Mamluk times, i.e., since the thirteenth century.

¹⁵ See BOA, Mevkufat kalemi, 2873, f. 41–42, 52–53, 58–60, 63.

¹⁶ brahim I (1640–1648); Mehmed IV (1648–87); Süleyman II (1687–91); Ahmed II (1691–95) Ahmed III (1703–30); and Mustafa II (1695–1703).

¹⁷ IA\57101 and CG 34\2, f. 10.

Since Bulliet has demonstrated the great importance of surveying Muslim names for determining the stage of conversion, a discussion of the Muslim names found in *kisve bahası* petitions would be useful. One of the limitations of my database of names, however, consists in the fact that they are proper names (*ism*). According to Bulliet, only a comparison between the popularity of the three categories of Muslim names among Muslims in general and among the sons of new Muslims can accurately show the stage of the process of conversion.¹⁸ In view of the limited size of the sample of names in the database of petitions—only 53 male names¹⁹—the statistical significance can only be brought out by comparing them to a context where a greater number of names can be accessed—proper (*ism*) as well as family names (*nasab*). The payroll registers of the Janissary corps (*yoklama defterleri*) for the period under consideration provides the best source for such comparison. As pointed out in chapter three, the new converts (voluntary as well as regular *dev irme*) in the seventeenth-century corps were heavily mixed with sons of Janissaries and Muslim-born cadres. A survey of their names, therefore, will highlight the new Muslim names found in petitions more precisely. The table below is based on the names of 576 *gulams* (a page, a trainee for the palace service, *acemio lan*) serving in ten of the units (*bölüks*) attached to the sultan's gardens in the capital during the last three months of 1090 (September 5, 1679–February 1, 1680).²⁰ The first column of the table lists all names encountered in the register. Non-Muslim names and *nasabs* constituting of names of villages or regions of origin are given only as totals. Columns two and three give the appearance frequency of the names listed in column one as the *gulams'* first names and their percentage values. Columns four and five tabulate the frequency of the names in column one among first generation Muslims listed in the whole register and their percentage value. As first generation Muslims, I consider those *gulams* who have a non-Muslim *ism* (e.g. Mladen of Akça Hisar), the name Abdullah or a non-Muslim name as *nasab* (e.g. Mahmud Abdullah, Mustafa Ruda), or with a non-Muslim ethnicity as *nisba* (e.g. Ali the Hungarian;

¹⁸ Bulliet, *Conversion*, 64–79.

¹⁹ Unfortunately, Bulliet's data does not contain female names, so his findings are based exclusively on male Muslim names. I am forced, therefore, to leave aside female Muslim names found in *kisve bahası* petitions.

²⁰ See NBKM, D 159, f. 68b–73b. The register is published in *OIIPB*, 81–92.

Mehmed the Bulgarian). Those *gulams* with a village or a region of origin as *nisba* are excluded since a definite proof of their Muslim, or non-Muslim, origin cannot be given.²¹ Columns six and seven tabulate the frequency of the names in column one as an *ism* among Muslims of the second generation and their percentage values. As second generation Muslims, I consider those *gulams* having a Muslim name as their *nasab*. The next two columns are devoted to the frequency of Muslim names encountered in *kisve bahası* petitions. The last three columns tabulate the frequency of the names in column one found in the *nasabs* and their percentage values as a total of *gulams* and of the total of Muslims of the second generation. Essentially, the names found in column nine are the names of the new Muslims of the previous generation. The synopsis at the bottom of the table provides information about the popularity of the five Muslim names, the Biblical/Quranic names and pre-Islamic Turkic names in each one of the categories represented in the columns.

Table 10. *Gulams'* names (1679) and new Muslims' names in *kisve bahası* petitions

Names	First name <i>gulams</i>	% of <i>total</i>	First name 1st gen.	%	First name 2nd gen.	%	First name petitions	%	Last name <i>gulams</i>	% of <i>total</i>	% of 2nd gen. <i>Mus.</i>
Abdullah	4	0.7			1	0.5	3	6.4	16	2.8	
Abdi	2	0.3	1	2.0							
Abdulgaki									1	0.2	0.5
Abdurrahman	2	0.3			1	0.5			3	0.5	1.4
Alaba									1	0.2	0.5
Ali	52	9.0	8	15.7	19	9.0	3	6.4	25	4.3	11.8
Ahmed	83	14.4	6	11.8	37	17.5	8	17.0	15	2.6	7.1
Bali	1	0.2									
Bayazid	1	0.2			1	0.5					
Bayram	2	0.3			2	0.9			2	0.3	0.9
Bekir	4	0.7							3	0.5	1.4
Bekta	1	0.2			1	0.5					
Cafer	3	0.5							2	0.3	0.9
Daud									1	0.2	0.5

²¹ S. Dimitrov ("Avant-propos," 30), one of the editors of the register, does not have any problem, however, with considering these *gulams* as collected through the system of *dev irme* exclusively and thus assumes for them a non-Muslim origin. Given the infrequency of *dev irme* collections in the seventeenth century and the fact that many of the *gulams* in the register are listed as coming from regions with a predominant or substantial Muslim population, such a view is at best unfounded.

Table 10 (cont.)

Names	First name gulams	% of total	First name 1st gen.	%	First name 2nd gen.	%	First name petitions	%	Last name gulams	% of total	% of 2nd gen. Mus.
Dervi	5	0.9									
Dilaver									1	0.2	0.5
Durak									1	0.2	0.5
Emin	18	3.1	3	5.9	7	3.3			11	1.9	5.2
Eüb	2	0.3	1	2.0							
Fahim									1	0.2	0.5
Gazi									1	0.2	0.5
İbrahim	35	6.1	4	7.8	15	7.1	2	4.3	18	3.1	8.5
dris									1	0.2	0.5
sa	1	0.2			1	0.5					
Ismail	9	1.6	2	3.9	4	1.9			2	0.3	0.9
shak	1	0.2			1	0.5					
slam	2	0.3			1	0.5			3	0.5	1.4
Habib	3	0.5			1	0.5					
Hamza	1	0.2			1	0.5			3	0.5	1.4
Halil	17	3.0			7	3.3			8	1.4	3.8
Hasan	40	6.9	2	3.9	14	6.6	1	2.1	12	2.1	5.7
Hızır									2	0.3	0.9
Hüseyin	41	7.1	1	2.0	15	7.1	2	4.3	10	1.7	4.7
Humami	1	0.2									
Mahmud	5	0.9	1	2.0	1	0.5			1	0.2	0.5
Mehmed	66	11.5	5	9.8	28	13.2	10	21.3	5	0.9	2.4
Muharrem	1	0.2			1	0.5			1	0.2	0.5
Murad	1	0.2							3	0.5	1.4
Musa	3	0.5			1	0.5			6	1.0	2.8
Musli	1	0.2							1	0.2	0.5
Mustafa	65	11.3	7	13.7	23	10.8	10	21.3	29	5.0	13.7
Mümi	2	0.3			2	0.9					
Mümin	1	0.2			1	0.5					
Nasuh	1	0.2									
Nebi	2	0.3			1	0.5					
Nuh	1	0.2			1	0.5					
Nuri	1	0.2									
Osman	16	2.8	3	5.9	6	2.8	3	6.4	5	0.9	2.4
Ömer	9	1.6	1	2.0	5	2.4			1	0.2	0.5
Ramazan	2	0.3	2	3.9					4	0.7	1.9
Rasul	3	0.5			1	0.5			1	0.2	0.5
Receb	8	1.4			2	0.9			4	0.7	1.9
Ridvan	1	0.2							1	0.2	0.5
Rüstem									1	0.2	0.5
Salih	7	1.2			2	0.9					
Sefer	6	1.0							1	0.2	0.5
Selim									1	0.2	0.5
Sinan	4	0.7			1	0.5			1	0.2	0.5
Süleyman	7	1.2			1	0.5	5	10.6	2	0.3	0.9
aban	9	1.6							6	1.0	2.8
Veli	4	0.7	1	2.0					1	0.2	0.5
Yusuf	14	2.4	2	3.9	3	1.4			7	1.2	3.3
Yakub	1	0.2									
Uruç									3	0.5	1.4

Table 10 (cont.)

Names	First name <i>gulams</i>	% of <i>total</i>	First name 1st gen.	%	First name 2nd gen.	%	First name petitions	%	Last name <i>gulams</i>	% of <i>total</i>	% of 2nd gen. Mus.
Zülfakir	2	0.3			2	0.9					
Zülkadır	1	0.2			1	0.5					
<hr/>											
<i>Non-Muslim Name</i>	1	0.2	1	2.0			6	11.3	3	0.5	
<hr/>											
<i>Nisba-City, Region</i>									340	59.0	
<hr/>											
<i>Nisba-ethnicity</i>									5	0.9	
<hr/>											
<i>Five Muslim names</i>	282	49.0	22	43.1	113	53.4	24	51.1	67	11.6	31.7
<hr/>											
<i>Bib./Quranic names</i>	71	12.4	8	15.7	26	12.4	7	14.9	36	6.1	16.9
<hr/>											
<i>Turkic names</i>	3	0.5	0	0.0	3	1.4	0	0.0	6	1.0	2.8
<hr/>											
<i>Subtotal</i>	356	61.9	30	58.8	142	67.2	31	66.0	109	18.7	51.4
<hr/>											
Grand Total	576		51		212		53		576		

I offer the following interpretation of the figures in the synopsis. As Bulliet has observed, most of the names given to Muslims fall into two groups—the five distinctive Muslim names and Biblical/Quranic names—together accounting for between a half and two thirds of the total in our case. The more important of the two is the first group. Overall, there are 282 names (49 percent) belonging to this category among the *gulams* listed in the register. Although there is about a ten percent difference between the popularity of these names among first and second generation Muslims in the register—43.1 and 53.4 percent respectively—I am willing to attribute this variation to the difference in the size of the samples of names belonging to first and second generation Muslims—51 vs. 212. When the Muslim names found in *kisve bahası* petitions (which names also belong to Muslims of the first generation) are taken into consideration, the difference is almost leveled out. With the figures of the two columns combined, there would be 104 first-generation vs. 212 second-generation Muslims and the popularity of the five Muslim names becomes 48 vs. 51.1 percent respectively. The difference of popularity of the five Muslim names between the Muslim-born and their fathers (51.1

and 31.7 percent), however, cannot be attributed to statistical discrepancies—the size of the sample data is the same. In my opinion, it suggests that the popularity of these names was still on the rise among sons of converts. The slightly lower figures of the five Muslim names in overall use (49 percent) and among sons of converts (51.1 percent), however, suggest that, in the society as whole, the peak of their popularity had just passed.

In the case of the group of Biblical/Quranic names, the situation is reversed. We find 36 such *nasabs* (16.9 percent) among the Muslim born, while there are only 26 (12.4 percent) such names encountered as *isms* in the same group of people, 15 (15.3 percent) among first generation Muslims (columns four and eight combined) and 71 (12.4 percent) in overall popularity. These figures suggest that the popularity of Biblical/Quranic names was still declining overall as well as among sons of converts.

The popularity of pre-Islamic Turkic names was also in decline—these names represent 2.8 percent of the *nasabs* of Muslim born, 1.4 percent of the *isms* and only 0.5 percent of all names. Among first generation Muslims, Turkic names were totally absent.

In other words, in the 1670s, the curve of popularity of the five Muslim names in Ottoman Balkan society had just started to diverge from the curve of their popularity among sons of converts, while the curve of popularity of Biblical/Quranic names was still declining and that of pre-Islamic Turkic names hovering just above zero. According to Bulliet's theory of conversion, all these features can be associated with the beginning of the last period of the process of conversion. In his words:

As new conversions became rare because of the diminished pool of non-Muslim potential converts, the desire of new converts to display their conversion by giving their sons distinctive Muslim names only intensified. Non-Muslims were few in number, mere remnants of once dominant communities. If one wished to break with such a minority community, one wished more than ever to make the break total. Among the patrician establishment, on the other hand, naming patterns loosened up considerably. Since everyone of importance had converted by then, there was no one to compete with in piety of naming. Competition between old and new convert families remained and took on new and more important characteristics leading to open political and social conflict, but in the field of name giving, there was simply no one left to impress.²²

²² Bulliet, *Conversion*, 71.

The conclusion of this statistical exercise is that, despite the fact that, statistically, the process of conversion was still in its “early majority” period in the Balkans, in terms of its maturity it had entered its “laggards” period. How can we explain such a development among a society with a non-Muslim community still numerically superior? To rephrase an argument by N. Steensgard to the effect that the scarcity of coinage in the Ottoman lands and the consequent debasement of that coinage at the end of the sixteenth century had less to do with the society as a whole than they did with the public treasury that brought about such a state of affairs,²³ the scarcity of new converts, which is associated with the “laggards” period, did not mean a scarcity of non-Muslims in society but only a scarcity of potential converts among them.

Place of Residence and Ethnic Origin

The division between the petitioners on the basis of their residence in urban or rural settlements was already mentioned in our discussion of their social status. Here, this information is presented in greater detail to highlight the new Muslims’ places of origin and affiliation to particular ethnic groups.

As may be expected, most of the petitioners come from the Balkans, a region with a much larger non-Muslim population. Among the 60 petitions that mention the new Muslims’ ethnicity, place or country of origin, 40 of them (66.7 percent) point to Balkan origin. The geographical distribution of the others is as follows—5 new Muslims (8.3 percent) are specified as coming from Asia Minor, 1 (1.7 percent) from the Middle East (Baghdad), 3 (5 percent) from vassal states (Wallachia and Moldavia), 3 (5 percent) from other areas (Georgia and Crete) and, perhaps surprisingly, 5 (8.3 percent) from Western Europe. The places of origin of three petitioners (5 percent) cannot be precisely identified.

With regard to the petitioners from the Balkans, it is interesting to note exactly their regions of origin. Following McGowan’s division of the Balkans into five zones (see chapter two), twelve peti-

²³ N. Steensgard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago, 1973), 79.

tioners can clearly be identified as coming from the north-east zone (eastern Bulgaria and the eastern half of the European part of Turkey), five from the far north-east (Dobrudja), four from the south-west zone (Albania and the Morea), three from the south-east (Greece, without the Morea, and the western part of European Turkey) and three from the north-west zone (Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and western Bulgaria). This regional distribution of the petitioners follows very closely the conclusions arrived at in chapter two regarding the development of the process of conversion in the Balkans at the beginning of the eighteenth century. There we concluded that the process of conversion had stopped in the north-west zone and substantially slowed down in the south-east zone by the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The poor representation of petitioners from these zones can, therefore, be attributed to a slowing of the process in those regions. With regard to the south-west and far north-east, on the other hand, it was concluded that the Islamization continued in both zones until the end of the eighteenth century, although slowing down in the far north-east zone after the first quarter of the century. The number of petitioners from these regions is only slightly larger than the first two zones discussed, but given the fact that their population was twice the size of the south-west and far north-east zones, it may be surmised that Islamization was indeed still continuing in the latter regions. In the north-east zone, Islamization was supposed to have stopped by the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, but was still continuing in the period under consideration—1670s–1730s. Given the fact that the north-east zone was the zone with the largest population at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is not surprising then that the largest share of petitioners came from this area. The proximity of the region to the capital may have played a role as well.

With regard to the petitioners from Asia Minor, my only observation would be that conversions must have occurred occasionally in regions where a sizable population of non-Muslims still existed—Trabzon, Erzerum and Bursa—although the process of conversion as a whole had long ago been completed. As pointed out in chapter five, in the Balkans, too, occasional conversions and the practice of *kisve bahası* petitions continued in the nineteenth century as well, despite the process of conversion as a whole having ended in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

The existence of western Europeans among the petitioners may

be surprising at first glance. Such a phenomenon, however, was also widespread in the 16th and 17th centuries²⁴ and not connected to the conversion process in the Balkans. One of the best-known cases, in the period which this study covers, was the conversion of the Count de Bonneval, a Frenchman on Austrian military service, who was given the title of Pasha and assumed the Muslim name of Ahmed Bey in 1729. It should be pointed out that the first petition by a western European at my disposal is dated to 1725.

I am reluctant to attribute ethnic origins to the petitioners based only on the fact that their places of origin fall within the modern boundaries of particular Balkan states. Nevertheless, some of them do identify themselves as belonging to an ethnic group. Six petitioners refer to themselves as Armenians (*Ermeni*), six as Greeks (*Rum*) and three as Bulgarians (*Bulgar*). Despite the fact that these petitioners were *de facto* abandoning their former communities, ethnic identification here may be regarded, first, as indication of the rise of ethnic consciousness among non-Muslim subjects of the empire and, only second, as an indication of the greater likeliness for converts to come from the ethnic groups enumerated above. It should also be pointed out in this respect that the number of petitions where the converts identify themselves as belonging to a religious community rather than an ethnic one are less numerous (see below).

Religion

Given the fact that Orthodox Christianity was the dominant non-Muslim religion in the Balkans and Asia Minor, it may be assumed that it was from among this faith that the majority of petitioners would come. In most of the petitions, however, the new Muslims are identified as non-Muslim subjects (*zimmi*) or unbelievers (*kâfir*). The element “renouncement of former religion” in the petitions’ superstructure does not explicitly specify the religion from which petitioner is converting but only refers to it as the “false” religion (*batil din*). In those petitions where the convert identifies himself through his former faith, Christianity is indeed the most common—8 peti-

²⁴ See for example Bartolomé and Lucile Bennisar, *Les chrétiens d’Allah: l’histoire extraordinaire des renégats: XVI^e et XVII^e siècles* (Paris, 2001).

tions. In five petitions, however, the petitioner is identified as being a Jew and in five as Armenian, i.e., belonging to the Armenian Monophysite Church. As pointed out earlier there are also five petitioners from Western Europe, whom I assume to have been Catholics originally. I am mentioning these facts only to demonstrate that conversion was also widespread among members of other Balkan religious communities. What were the specifics of the process of conversion among these communities? Unfortunately, there are no studies of conversion to Islam among Ottoman Jews and Armenians who, being primarily urban dwellers, may not have followed the patterns established for the rest of the Balkans. Cases of conversion among the Jews are generally believed to be an exception because Jews were able to isolate themselves from their environment and to preserve their culture, thus becoming more resistant to conversion.²⁵ In view of the limited information in my database about cases of Jews converting to Islam, I cannot provide a more informed opinion at this stage of research.

Reasons and Motives for Conversion

As pointed out in chapter five, the element of “enlightenment” in the petitions, where the new Muslims proclaim their attainment of divine truth or their realization of the superiority of Islam, was an essential step in conversion to Islam and should only be regarded as indicative of the voluntary nature of the conversion.

Information about the reasons and motives behind the decision of new Muslims to submit petitions to the sultan can be found in the element “reasons for conversion” of the petitions’ superstructure. There, we find details about the new Muslims’ former lives, which, combined with the facts known of their personalities, may throw light on their motives. Furthermore, we can also deduce a new Muslim’s reasons for conversion by what he asks for in return. The logical connection between the “reasons for conversion” and “expected reward” elements, each one of them representing a corresponding stage in the two main relationship sets—“novice-caliph” and “subject-ruler”—is reflected in the petitions’ superstructure. In view of

²⁵ See Zelyazkova, *Islamization*, 255.

the fact that the two elements in question contain data of a related nature, they may be deemed as representing a relationship set of their own, i.e., the “reasons for conversion” relationship set. Analysis of the data contained in this set allows me to divide the petitioners’ reasons and motives for conversion into three major groups.

In the first group, I include the petitioners who indicate as a motive the difficulty of making their living for one reason or another. Since the aspect of material reward is an essential feature of the *kisve bahası* institution, I assume that such new Muslims may have sought a solution to their problems in conversion to Islam in the presence of the sultan.

It should be pointed out, however, that there is a significant body of petitions—59 in all (7.8 percent)—in which the new Muslims use the word “poor, needy” (*fakir*) to identify themselves at the beginning of the petition, instead of *kul*. “*Fakir*,” however, has the meaning of “I, your humble servant, in need of God’s bounty and mercy” as well, which meaning, in the context of *kisve bahası* petitions, may be more plausible. Although I do not rule out the possibility that the petitions in which we find the word *fakir* may have expressed the notion of the petitioner’s neediness in any material sense as well, I am reluctant, only on this evidence, to include all of them in the group of petitions submitted by people in difficult economic straits.

Nevertheless, there are petitions in which the dire economic situation of the new Muslims is unambiguous. In such petitions, the word *fakir* or its synonym *fukara* may be used after the salutation, together with the verbs *imek* or *olmak*—*fukarayım/fakir olmakla* (I am poor). In others—29 petitions, relevant to 40 new Muslims (5.3 percent of the total petitioners)—the notion is conveyed more descriptively, e.g.:

Bilâ sahib ve diyar-i garib olmakla yatak ve oturmak yerim olmayub
(I do not have anything and I am a stranger from another country.
I do not have a place to stay and sleep),²⁶ or

Kâr ve kesbe kadar de ilim ve deyn cihetinden bir eye malik olmayup
(I am not able to earn my living and, because of a debt, I no longer
have any possessions).²⁷

²⁶ 1\11000, f. 1.

²⁷ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 2. See Appendix 1, Document 1.

Another group includes petitioners who, although they do not state their impoverishment directly, nevertheless describe themselves as left without the support of their community or close relatives. I assume again that widowhood or orphanhood automatically puts one in the category of the socially weak and that the material rewards gained through the *kisve bahası* institution may thus have been a sufficient stimulus for conversion. In fact, 13 of the petitioners who clearly point to their dire financial straits are also identified as belonging to the group of petitioners left without the support of their community or close relatives. Therefore, in the group of new Muslims who primarily saw in Islam a solution for their material problems, I include also all petitioners identified as being elderly, orphans, single-mothers, single-fathers, widows and displaced strangers. That brings the total of new Muslims in this group to 144 (19.1 percent of the total petitioners). Obviously, S. Dimitrov had such people in mind when he described the petitioners as men and women fallen into desperate and critical situations, searching through conversion to Islam for salvation from starvation and poverty, from debts and creditors. However, although significant in number, this group cannot be deemed representative of all the new Muslims who converted through the *kisve bahası* institution, as Dimitrov has done.

In the second group of petitioners, I include those who asked for an appointment to the palace or the army, in return for their conversion to Islam. In other words, although seeking to become members of the Ottoman nomenklatura, those petitioners sought ultimately to attain financial security as well, it was the change in their social status that was more important to them and that may have provided the main motive for their conversion. In some instances, the petitioners explicitly state that they desire to become part of the group of privileged people, i.e., the *askeri* class.²⁸

There are 141 new Muslims (18.8 percent) in my database who indicated that they would like an appointment in the state's service as a reward for their conversion. A significant portion of them—72 (51 percent of the petitioners included in this group)—expressed their preference for a position in the Janissary corps or in the *sipahi* corps stationed in the capital. It seems that the *bostancı* and the *cebeci* corps were the two subdivisions of the Janissaries most favored by the

²⁸ See for example OAK 34\35, f. 1 and OAK 34\68, f. 1.

petitioners. In one petition, the new Muslim even specified the individual unit (*bölük*) in which he desired to serve.²⁹ A role may have been played in such cases by the new Muslims' desire to serve in units where they knew other people—either the person who had been acting as their patron, or simply people of the same background. Several petitions in which the new Muslim states that he has been honored with Islam in the presence of the *bostancıbaşı* or the Janissary *agası* and that he already serves under one or the other's command³⁰ are evidence for the first situation. Evidence for the concentration of people of similar ethnic background or natives of a particular region or village may be found in the *yoklama* registers. For example, in one such register dated 1684, which lists the *gulams* serving in the palace gardens of Edirne in the last three months of 1095 (Sep. 11–Dec. 7, 1684), 75 out of the 516 names recorded there are described as natives of Edirne, 30 of Eski Za ra, 14 of Dimetoka, 13 of Serres, 10 of Filibe, 17 of Kazanlık, etc.³¹

Other petitioners—24 in number—wished for different positions in the palace, such as prayer reader,³² and one even expressed interest in a post as eunuch.³³ For a very limited number of people—three in total—the desired positions meant not simply membership in the privileged *askeri* class but a promotion, i.e., their conversion was at least in part motivated by the desire for career advancement. The rest of the petitioners did not specify a position. Needless to say, the new Muslims in this group were males. In one case only did a woman show a desire to serve in the palace.³⁴

In the third group of petitioners, I include those who had some other motivation to convert to Islam, mostly from reasons of a personal or familial nature. In two petitions, there is an indication of psychological pressure having been brought to bear on the convert from within the family. In the first example, a young man from the city of Yanbolu states that his two brothers had already accepted Islam,³⁵ while in the second one a woman with her two children

²⁹ SL 6\18, f. 8.

³⁰ See 1A\57319, f. 46–47; 1A\57290.

³¹ See NBKM D 159, f. 44b–47a. The register is published in *OIIPB*, 92–97.

³² SL 6\18, f. 2.

³³ 1A\57319, f. 51.

³⁴ 1A\57318.

³⁵ 145\108.

wishes to follow the example of her husband.³⁶ Another two petitions, in which family matters are again the motive for conversion, are very characteristic of the mindset of women in this period. In the first one, a Greek girl decides to embrace Islam in order to escape the unwanted marriage which has been arranged by her parents.³⁷ In the second, an Armenian woman hopes, by converting to Islam, to turn the law in her favor in a family feud with her son over inheritance.³⁸ Finally, for some non-Muslims, such as young Greek who first migrated to Istanbul and worked as a craftsman but chose to convert to Islam out of a desire take part in military campaigns,³⁹ conversion to Islam may have been the avenue for adventure or military glory.

Reward

When discussing the reasons for conversion of the new Muslims who submitted petitions to the sultan, it should be pointed out that it is far from certain that all their wishes were granted. As a matter of fact, the endorsements of the officials on the petitions usually do not show that anything more than a set of Muslim clothes or its cash equivalent was ever granted. Nevertheless, the frequency and the persistence of the petitions making such demands, and the constant references to such requests as legitimate and ordained “by the law” or by “the established custom,” point to the existence of precedents. In other words, a survey of the data related to the reward granted to petitioners, i.e., what was actually received in return for conversion through the institution of *kisve bahası*, may help us to better determine their motivation.

As pointed out, the endorsements specify the granting of a set of clothes (*kisve*) or, occasionally, a luxury set of clothes (*mükemmel kisve*) or their cash equivalent (*kisve bahası*). To what exactly, however, did these words refer? The best source for such an inquiry is the register accounting for the treasury disbursements to new Muslims in the fiscal year 1689–80, discussed in chapter five. According to

³⁶ 1\10995.

³⁷ 1\11011. See Appendix 1, Document 7.

³⁸ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 50. See Appendix 1, Document 10.

³⁹ OAK 76\52, f. 30.

this register, 193 new Muslim men, received 1,200 *akçes* each, while 146 women received 2,170 *akçes*, 18 boys 700 *akçes* and the 22 girls 1,000 *akçes* each as the equivalent of a set of Muslim clothes (*kisve bahası*). In addition, the men received two pairs of pants, made of first quality cloth, while the boys received one extra pair.⁴⁰ Were such amounts sufficient to motivate conversion on economic grounds? Bearing in mind that according to the *yoklama* registers of the period, an *acemi o lan*'s daily wage was two *akçes*, then a boy would receive as *kisve bahası* the equivalent of a year's salary. Further investigation in the court registers reveals that a house in the provincial city of Vidin was appraised at 3,600 *akçes*,⁴¹ i.e., less than the combined amount that a family of three would have received as *kisve bahası*. It may be concluded that, although not sufficient to make one rich, the *kisve bahası* would have represented a substantial amount for a person in difficult economic circumstances and thus, may be considered as a considerable incentive for conversion.

The equivalent of a luxury set of clothes (*mükemmel kisve*) amounted to an even larger sum than those mentioned above. As a rule, petitions specifying the granting of *mükemmel kisve* describe in detail its elements. Therefore, we are even able to determine not only its value but also the articles of clothing involved. According to one such petition, a luxury set of clothes included: an embroidered robe (*konto luk*), cotton pants (*kutni diünlük*), trousers (*çak ırhk*), a vest (*anteri*), turban-cloth (*destar*), a belt (*ku ak*), underpants (*came yı*), a turban (*kavuk*) and slippers (*mest-i papuç*). The estimated value of such a set totaled 50 *guru*, which was equal to 6,000 *akçes*.⁴² However, this five-fold increase over the value of regular set of clothes should not be regarded as an added incentive to conversion. As was pointed out earlier, *mükemmel kisve* was usually given to new Muslims who already enjoyed a higher social status in their original communities and who aspired to attain an even higher position in society on conversion; the *kisve bahası* in their case could not have been any great incentive.

Furthermore, it may be observed that the value of neither a regular nor a luxury set of clothes remained unchanged over time. For

⁴⁰ 1\10817, f. 2b.

⁴¹ NBKM, S 13, f. 3b.

⁴² One *guru* was equal to 120 *akçes* in the period under consideration. See evket Pamuk, "Money in the Ottoman Empire, 1326-1914," in *nalcık and Quataert, History*, 967.

example, the *kisve bahası* granted to the Armenian from Tekfurda and the woman from Yedi Kule was specified as being worth 1,000 *akçes* in 1689,⁴³ while the one granted to two men from Crete was valued at only 800 *akçes* in 1700.⁴⁴ By 1706, however, the cash value of a regular set of clothes had again increased to the rate of 10 *guru* (1,200 *akçes*).⁴⁵ Only a few years later, in 1710, the Central Accounting Department noted that it had become the practice for the regular set of clothes to be paid at the rate of 2–3, instead of 10 *guru* and a luxury set at 15–20, instead of 50–60 *guru*, and proposed the rates of 6 and 25 *guru* as more adequate.⁴⁶

With regard to the variation in the rates of *mükemmel kisve bahası*, I will only cite a petition dating from 1721, in which the *ba defterdar* requests an estimate for the value of *mükemmel kisve* being granted to the petitioner. According to the estimate, which traces the value of a luxury set over an interval of four years, the amount paid was 16 *guru* in 1716, 25 *guru* in 1719 and 64 *guru* in 1720. The *ba defterdar* orders that the petitioner be paid at the rate of 25 *guru*.⁴⁷ Obviously, the rates of *kisve bahası* varied, depending on the cash available in the treasury, on the particular petition and on the whims of the grantees themselves.

So far, our inquiry into the actual rewards granted to the petitioners has been concerned with the cash value of a set of Muslim clothes. There is evidence, however, that the reward offered was not limited to the latter. To some petitioners deemed as being in especially pitiful circumstances, such as for example a penniless, blind elderly man⁴⁸ or a widower with seven children,⁴⁹ the crown was more generous. Those petitioners were rewarded by being put on the government payroll—two *akçes* per day in the first case and 14 *akçes* per day in the second. In another case, a woman being harassed by her former co-religionists for converting to Islam was granted 40 *guru* to buy a house in a new place, where she would be safe.⁵⁰ Furthermore, whereas cases of impoverished people being put on

⁴³ See 1\10886, f. 1 (Appendix 1, Document 4) and 1A\57319, f. 42.

⁴⁴ See 1\10923, f. 1–2 and 1\10926, f. 1–2.

⁴⁵ See OAK 162\39 and NPTA XX 1\28, f. 21.

⁴⁶ SL 6\18, f. 3.

⁴⁷ See 1A\6808.

⁴⁸ NPTA XX 1\28, f. 2 (Appendix 1, Document 1).

⁴⁹ 1A\6783, f. 1.

⁵⁰ 1\11107.

government payroll are few in number, there is no shortage of such cases among those aspiring for a position in the army. For example, in a document issued by the Central Accounting Department that accompanies a series of eight petitions, one of which is in the name of a person requesting an appointment in the Janissary corps, it is specified that 7 petitioners received 10 *guru* each as *kisve bahası* and one petitioner 12.5 *guru* as the cash-value of a Janissary uniform.⁵¹ In other words, the latter person was appointed to the Janissary corps in addition to being granted *kisve bahası*. In a number of other petitions, the new Muslims state that they had already been honored with Islam in the presence of the sultan and employed in the Janissary corps.⁵² Their requests are only for *kisve bahası* itself. In yet another petition, we find an endorsement from the Grand Vizier that the petitioner—a Venetian, probably a former merchant—be given a luxury set of clothes and appointed to a suitable position in one of the army corps.⁵³ It may be concluded that a significant portion of the new Muslims converted through the *kisve bahası* institution were indeed admitted to the Janissary corps and that we have every reason to consider the latter institution a continuation of the *dev irme* institution on a voluntary basis.

Psychology

The pragmatism shown by the petitioners has already been noted to in our discussion of their motivations in converting. The conclusions arrived at in connection with the naming patterns of the new Muslims for the period 1670s–1730s—the “laggards” period in the process of conversion in the Balkans—may also serve as an indication of their behavior. According to Bulliet, those people taking the decision to convert to Islam in this period would try harder to break away from their old community and adapt themselves to the new one than previous generations of converts had done. The goal of distinguishing themselves from the old community at any price, in its turn, may result in the hardening of social relations and even

⁵¹ See 1\10981, f. 1–8.

⁵² See for example, NPTA XX 1\28, f. 23; 1A\57319, f. 46–47; 1\11000, f. 4 and 1A\57290, f. 1.

⁵³ 1/11111 (Appendix 1, Document 14).

give rise to conflicts between new Muslims and non-Muslims. Such a phenomenon is attested in several petitions dating from the last decades of the period under study—1720s–1730s. In these petitions, the new Muslims report that, as a consequence of their conversion, they found themselves ostracized from their former communities.⁵⁴ On the other hand, ethnic identification in the *kisve bahası* petitions shows that some of the new Muslims did not necessarily associate conversion to Islam with losing their ethnic identity. Such a mindset may explain the large number of *fetvas* issued during the period under consideration that discuss cultural conflicts between new Muslims and their new community after conversion.

Another important characteristic of the petitioners' behavior, already alluded to in chapter five, is the active role they played in the *kisve bahası* institution. The new Muslims converted through the institution were neither randomly picked from the streets of Istanbul and dragged before the sultan to pronounce the *ahadet*, nor did they simply receive money and clothes only by virtue of finding themselves "somehow in the front of the treasury," as S. Dimitrov believes to have been the case.⁵⁵

In support of such a view, we can point to the fact that, although the conversions occurred mostly in the palace and a substantial number of the petitioners were indeed residents of Istanbul or its surroundings, more than two thirds of the petitioners had come to the capital from the provinces. I argue that these people may have heard about the benefits of conversion before the sultan and consciously decided to go to the capital and convert in his presence, rather than simply accept Islam in the place of their residence. Furthermore, traveling to the capital, especially from remote provinces, must have been quite a challenge at the time, a challenge that not everyone would have had the courage to undertake. One petition, in which a woman coming from Baghdad mentions that she had been robbed on the way to the capital, attests to the practical difficulties facing the converts.⁵⁶ Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that everyone who petitioned the sultan succeeded in gaining an audience with him. On the contrary, the large number of petitions mentioning an

⁵⁴ See 1\11107, f. 1 and 1\11063, f. 1.

⁵⁵ Dimitrov, "Avant-propos," 35.

⁵⁶ OAK 76\52, f. 5.

Ottoman official acting as mentor implies that it may have been rather difficult for people without help from “inside” to obtain royal favors. A petitioner from Erzerum, for example, mentions that he had to wait for three months before receiving a royal audience.⁵⁷ It has been already suggested that lower functionaries in the palace might have also acted as intermediaries between the new Muslims and the palace dignitaries who were in a position to “honor” them with Islam.⁵⁸ In other words, it may be concluded that the decision to convert through the institution of *kisve bahası* was not an arbitrary one. Rather, it was an expression of the determination of people with a particular goal in mind, people who were prepared to undertake a perilous voyage to the capital and endure substantial hardship in the often forlorn hope of obtaining an audience with the sultan. In my opinion only the most determined were able to succeed in the competition for royal favor. This observation may be especially important in regard to the *kisve bahası* institution as continuation of the *dev irme* institution. The determination and endurance shown by the petitioners means that guidelines applied in the selection of Janissaries through the *dev irme*, designed to ensure that they possessed certain qualities, had simply been replaced by natural selection.

Not only were the petitioners active in the initiation of their act of conversion, they were also active participants in determining what they would receive in return. The range of petitioners’ requests discussed above demonstrates the importance of practical considerations over spiritual ones in the new Muslims’ motivation to convert. As pointed out in chapter five, an element of bargaining can often be detected in the petitions. A perfect example in this respect is the aforementioned petition of the Jew who wanted an appointment as head of the state mint. Apparently, at stake here was a very profitable operation, so that he did not count on his conversion as sufficient reason to achieve this goal but also offered to pay annually the amount of 31,000 *akçes* to the treasury and to use his influence among the Jewish community to attract more converts to Islam.⁵⁹ In another petition, a new Muslim requests as reward a luxury set of clothes but, realizing perhaps that he may not qualify for such an honor, mentions that he would not be disappointed to receive half of its

⁵⁷ OAK 53\23, f. 3.

⁵⁸ See chapter four.

⁵⁹ See NPTA XX 1\28, f. 26. Appendix 1, Document 9.

cash value.⁶⁰ The case of the petitioner who sought to qualify for the *cebeci* corps by pretending to be disabled has been already cited above.

Some petitioners attempted to disguise the worldly reasons underlying their decision to convert by stating in their petitions that the idea first occurred in a dream.⁶¹ A reoccurrence of this dream—three times as a rule—is usually put forward as proof of the dream’s supernatural origin. The case of a Greek woman, who has been trying to find a way to pay off her debt, is especially interesting. In her dream, a voice says three times: “Accept Islam and on the Imperial council the Ruler of the Kingdom will reward you for that!”⁶² Although the imaginary nature of this dream is apparent to modern readers, for the superstitious minds of the eighteenth century it may have sounded like an incredible revelation.

Summary

We can summarize the most common social, demographic and psychological characteristics of the group of new Muslims in our database converted through the institution of *kisve bahası* as being the following.

1. Despite the cases where new Muslims petitioned the sultan for a cash reward only, having already received an audience and been awarded a position (meaning that he was of *askeri* class at the time of the petition), most petitioners were originally from the *raya* class. The insignificant share of petitioners with higher social standing may well be a reflection of the early stage in the development of an elite among non-Muslims.
2. It was more likely for urban dwellers to seek a conversion in the royal presence than agriculturalists. In addition to residents of Istanbul and its environs, most petitioners originated from the north-east Balkans.

⁶⁰ 1A\57319, f. 9.

⁶¹ See for example, 1\10981, f. 7; 1A\57319, f. 5; 1\11106, f. 1.

⁶² 1\11106, f. 1. See Appendix 1, Document 13.

3. The petitioners were primarily adult single men. Among women, widowed women were most likely to convert.
4. In terms of religious affiliation, it was Eastern Orthodox Christians that predominated among the petitioners. However, Jews and Monophysite Armenians, and even Catholics in the later part of the period, were almost as likely to seek to convert due to their primarily urban backgrounds.
5. The mindset of the petitioners may be characterized as exhibiting a rather practical attitude towards conversion to Islam and an exceptional determination to achieve their goals. The majority of the new Muslims seeking conversion in the sultan's presence were motivated to convert by the hope of financial reward, granted to them in the form of *kisve bahası*. This group included non-Muslims belonging to the category of the socially disadvantaged, i.e., orphans, widows, single fathers, single mothers, elderly without support and strangers unable to put down roots in the country. The other major motivation for conversion was the desire for social advancement. This group consisted mostly of single male petitioners. Coming primarily from lower social classes, they aspired to nothing more than an appointment to the common ranks of the Janissary corps. The few among them with higher social standing sought higher positions in the army or the palace.
6. The relations between the petitioners and members of their former confessional group, whether family or neighbors, were often marked by resentment at their attempts to disassociate themselves from the latter as much as possible and by conflicts with the members of their new community due to cultural differences.

CONCLUSION

Conversion to Islam in the Ottoman Balkans initially followed a pattern similar to the one established by Bulliet for the regions incorporated in the central Islamic realm during the seventh and eighth centuries. Islamization was a gradual process, which started in the fifteenth century with the conversion of the former Balkan military elite. It developed as a widespread phenomenon in the sixteenth and especially in the seventeenth century, when larger segments of the rural population started to embrace Islam. The seventeenth century may be designated as the Balkans' "age of conversions." By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the third period of the conversion process—"early majority"—had been completed. At this time, close to forty percent of the Balkan population was Muslim. In terms of the factors behind conversion, the Balkans also conformed to earlier patterns. With the exception of the boys collected through the *devirme* institution, conversion was primarily a voluntary process, driven by a combination of social and economic factors such as market pressures, desire for social advancement, religious syncretism and past heretical influences.

However, instead of continuing into the period of "late majority" according to Bulliet's schema, the Islamization process came to a sudden halt in most of the Balkan lands in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Such a break with the usual pattern of Islamization may rightly be considered a surprise.

I have tried to find an answer to this puzzling situation in *kisve bahası* petitions, submitted primarily during the period 1670s–1730s, and thus reflect the unique social conditions prevailing in the Ottoman Empire during the last decades of the conversion process. I have come to the conclusion that the petitions point to the existence of an elaborate institution for religious conversion in the period under consideration. In my opinion, the introduction of ceremonies and documentation of conversion, manifested in the *kisve bahası* practice, is evidence for a change in the nature of conversion brought about by the rise of fundamentalism in Ottoman society. In other words, these last decades of the Islamization process in the Balkans coincided with

the change from a social milieu favoring religious syncretism to a more fundamentalist-minded one.¹

If we follow Bulliet's theory, which states that the change in the nature of conversion is the watershed between the period of intensive conversion ("early" and "late majority"), on one hand, and the last period in the conversion process ("laggards"), on the other, we will conclude that the institutionalization of the *kisve bahası* practice marks the beginning of the latter period. Therefore, it can be surmised that in the Balkans, the "laggards" period arrived in the period 1670s–1730s, at a time when actually the "late majority" was supposed to start.

Such a conclusion is supported by the analysis of the naming patterns of the petitioners as well as the state of interfaith relations depicted in the petitions and the *fetva* collection of the period. The naming patterns, for example, reveal an onomasticon primarily limited to the five most distinctive Muslim names at the time when, in the society as whole, their popularity had started to decline—a situation linked to the "laggards" period. On a personal level, the petitions attest to another characteristic of the "laggards" period—the difficulties that new Muslims faced in maintaining amicable relations with their former communities due to the pressure to gain acceptance within their new community. The heightened tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims, born from the natural tendency for the latter to regard the behavior of the converts towards themselves as emanating from the Muslim community as a whole, while for the former to regard any sign of disapproval of such behavior on the part of the non-Muslim community as an insult to themselves, further slowed down the conversion process. The relations of converts with their new community were also not easy. New Muslims were often unable to adapt to the more demanding spiritual and cultural challenges of the time and found themselves ostracized and even pun-

¹ Islamic fundamentalism had slowly been gaining momentum throughout the seventeenth century in response to what was perceived to be a blurring in the bounds of Islam at the time. John O. Voll regards religious fundamentalism as a mechanism of social adjustment: "The fundamentalist style serves as a corrective adjustment mechanism. In the context of change and adaptation, fundamentalists work to keep the basic Islamic message in full view of the community. When adjustment to local conditions or the adoption of new ideas and techniques threaten to obliterate the unique and authentically Islamic elements, fundamentalist pressure begins to build." See John O. Voll, *Islam. Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1994), 22–23.

ished by their new community. Such cases further diminished the pool of potential converts among the non-Muslim community. Simply, the greater demands placed upon potential converts eventually resulted in resistance to conversion and in its tapering off. Furthermore, another characteristic of the “laggards” period—the ideological strife between descendants of converts from the earlier and later periods of conversion—can be seen in the struggle of converts such as Ibrahim Müteferrika, who actively promoted change and helped bring about the cultural florescence of the Tulip period (*Lâle devri*), against the fundamentalist forces that put an end to it. This being the case, the end of the Tulip period and the triumph of the fundamentalist powers in Ottoman society in 1730 represent the outcome of the ideological strife between descendants of “early” and “late” converts. In other words, the end of the Tulip period may have been symbolic of the completion of the conversion process in most of the Balkan lands.

Nevertheless, the conclusion for an early arrival of the “laggards” period still does not answer the question as to why it has happened in the first place. I argue that the uniqueness of the Islamization in the Balkans may be linked to economic and social changes within Ottoman society as well as developments on the international scene, changes to which I would like to allude only briefly in closing.

This study has observed that the transformation of granting *kisve bahası* from a practice into an institution of conversion is connected with another peculiar feature of seventeenth-century Ottoman society—the transformation of the Ottoman elite from a primarily *reaya*-born, merit-based class into a protégé-based, self-perpetuating privileged social stratum. The *kisve bahası* institution, therefore, in allowing the admission of a limited number of lower-class members into the nomenklatura, became the natural continuation on a voluntary basis of the *dev imne* institution. As conversion to Islam increasingly became a prerequisite for membership in the nomenklatura by the middle of the seventeenth century, the *kisve bahası* institution can also be regarded as a unique instrument for social advancement of the lower classes.

It seems, however, that by the end of the seventeenth century the political power of the “nomenklatura households” has surpassed the power of the “imperial household.”² In other words, in the eyes of

² See for example Abou El-Haj, “Households,” where he surveys the backgrounds

the *reaya*, the prestige of the Janissary corps must have been steadily diminishing since the beginning of the eighteenth century. The process of gradual transformation of the corps from a source of strength for the military and the central government to a lawless militia at the time of their destruction and disbandment in 1826 is well known. By virtue of the past association of converts with the corps,³ the distrust of the political establishment towards Janissaries may have contributed to installing distrust towards new Muslims in general. The changed attitude towards converts at the beginning of the eighteenth century is unambiguous at the time of Sultan Mahmud II.⁴

Furthermore, by 1768, it was the locally organized militia, known as *levends*, drawn also from the Balkan *reaya*, who formed the bulk of the available military manpower.⁵ The *levends* signed voluntary for military campaigns but those who were Christian were not required to convert to Islam. In other words, the latter may be deemed as serving the role of “temporary” Muslims. Such opportunities may have eliminated the need for the institution of *kisve bahası* and, perhaps, for conversion as an instrument of social advancement.

We can explain the withdrawal of potential converts from using the institution of *kisve bahası* to enter the Janissary corps, but what can be said about the reluctance on the part of the other significant group of non-Muslims attracted by the institution—the socially disadvantaged—for whom the *kisve bahası* institution served the role of a social welfare program?

According to Bulliet, religious conversion follows the same psychology that underlies innovation diffusion in human society, with

of officials in the central and provincial governments for the period 1683–1703. Abou El-Haj’s research shows that only 26.3% of the officials in the central government and 38.5% in the provincial government can be originally associated with the palace during the period under consideration.

³ For observations that such connection was made even in the nineteenth century see Hakan Erden, “Recruitment for the ‘Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad’ in the Arab Provinces, 1826–1828,” in Israel Gershoni, Hakan Erdem and Ursula Woköck, ed., *Histories of the Middle East: New Directions* (London, 2002), 194.

⁴ Mahmud II is known for his order that convents should not be conscribed into his army. On another occasion he openly expresses distrust towards a Greek notable converting to Islam: “We cannot trust their embracing of Islam at such times (*bunların bu aralık Kabul-ü İslam etmelerine itimad olunmaz*)”—Erden, *op. cit.*, 194.

⁵ In 1683, there were about 10,000 *levends* at Vienna, 20,000 at Pruth in 1711 and 85–90,000 during the Ottoman-Russian war of 1768–1774—see Virginia Aksan, “Locating the Ottomans Among Early Modern Empires,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 3, 2 (1999), 122.

the difference that if the superiority of one religion over another cannot be clearly demonstrated, the same result can be achieved by means of direct or indirect financial rewards, persecution, etc. Therefore, the widespread conversion to Islam in the Balkans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries meant that non-Muslims considered it advantageous to convert to Islam for different reasons. Indeed, conversion to Islam for the new Muslims admitted through the *kısve bahası* institution was shown to be primarily a pragmatic rather than a spiritual affair. The halt of Islamization, therefore, meant that at a certain point the advantages gained through conversion were perceived as outweighed by its disadvantages. Following this line of logic, it may be concluded that increasingly non-Muslims did not find it economically or socially advantageous to convert to Islam from the second quarter of the eighteenth century onward. What could have influenced such change in perception?

Developments such as gravitation towards religious orthodoxy not only in Ottoman but in Habsburg and Russian territories as well, should undoubtedly also be taken into consideration when evaluating interfaith relations in the Balkans. Nevertheless, it is not very likely that Russian Orthodoxy exerted much influence in Balkan lands in the first half of the eighteenth century when the crucial brake in the minds of the non-Muslim population must have happened, nor it is likely that Christian Orthodoxy ever captured the minds of the Balkan population.⁶ If we accept the notion that conversion meant acceptance of Ottoman rule than anything else (which was the case in the preceding centuries), it may lead us to the conclusion that the halt of Islamization indicates disillusionment with Ottoman rule, or . . . confusion as to who is in authority, the latter being the case in the eighteenth century, when the local notables (*ayans*) started to dominate local politics.

Something else that readily comes to mind is the integration of the Ottoman Empire into the world economy in the middle of the eighteenth century⁷ and the rise of the *çiftlik* mode of production.⁸

⁶ Bulgarians, for example, remained quite secular and pragmatic well in the 19th century and thus the primarily secular nature of their nationalism—see Ivailo Grouev, “Revisiting the Bulgarian Nationalism: the Case of the Turkish Minority” (University of Ottawa: Ph.D. dissertation in progress).

⁷ See I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, vol. 3 (New York, 1974), 129–130.

⁸ For the rise of *çiftlik*s, see H. nalçık, “The Emergence of Big Farms, *Çiftlik*s: State, Landlords and Tenants,” in *Contributions à l'histoire économique et sociale de l'Empire*

Both developments were connected with the rise of a prosperous class of non-Muslims in the Balkans—merchants, moneylenders, tax collectors and landowners, whose lifestyle did not differ substantially from that of the Muslim elite.⁹ Whenever Muslim protection was needed, it was simply purchased. In other words, non-Muslims may have become increasingly convinced that it was more economically and socially advantageous for them to stay a part of their community than to convert.

Ottoman, ed. J. Bacqué-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Paris, 1983), 119–24; Radushev, *Agrarnite institutsii*, 135–170; and B. McGowan, “Men and Land: South-eastern Europe during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries,” in idem, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe*, 45–79.

⁹ B. McGowan, “The Age of the Ayans, 1699–1812,” in nalçık and Quataert, *History*, 669.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1

KISVE BAHASI PETITIONS:
FACSIMILES AND TRANSLATIONS



Document 1

Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Prosperous Sultan, may you be healthy!

Your humble slave is old and blind. Now I was honored with the Holy Islam but I am not able to earn my living and because of a debt, I no longer have any possessions. I am throwing myself at your feet and I am pleading with you, my Merciful Sultan, that you kindly order a pension of several *akçes* allotted from the customs of Edirne to be bestowed on your poor slave. The rest is left to the decree of your Majesty, my Illustrious Sultan.

Your servant, Süleyman, new Muslim

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! To be registered by the appropriate department that because he is blind and was honored with the Holy Islam in the Imperial presence, he is given an income of two *akçes* a day. This is my command! [Date]: April 1, 1671

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Correct! Accounted! Prepare a Treasury bill!

[Note from the *ba muhasebe*]: Registered. The Treasury bill was issued.

۲۳
 ۷۵
 مکارم زور زور
 ۱۴
 بارشاهم
 ضاغ اول سونه
 سعادتلو
 بوقولدری خاص اربہ پارکیری خونکار طلبہ سینہ
 ایک سند دور خدمت ابدرم و کافر اغلو کافرم
 بادشاهم حضور شریفینده ایمان و اسلام
 قبول انکار استرم باقی فرمان پادشاهم بندور

Document 2

My Prosperous Padishah, may you be healthy!

Your humble slave has been a servant at the table of the stable-grooms of the Imperial horses for two years now and I am an unbeliever, son of an unbeliever. I want to accept the [true] faith and Islam in the holly presence of my Padishah. The rest is left to the decree of my Padishah.

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give to [this] one person the [cash value of new] clothes according to the custom! This is my command! March 8, 1686

Document 3

Your Majesty, my Prosperous and Generous Sultan, may you be healthy!

Your humble slave is a Greek boy from Gölükese who worked as a craftsman in Istanbul. In your presence, by the grace of God, the exalted, I was honored with the Holy Islam and wished to go on a Holy war. I wish, in [return] for my desire to go on a Holy war and for the [cash value of new] clothes, that you help me get a low rank position in your noble service. The rest is left to the decree of my Sultan.

Your Servant

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give [new] clothes for exactly one person according to the custom. This is my command!
[Date]: April 14, 1686

۹

MS. 10
 1/10/1866
 1/10/1866

حضرت مولانا ابوالفتح محمد رفیع
 صاحب مدرسہ دارالعلوم دیوبند
 دیوبند

بزرگوار

اللہ تعالیٰ سے دعا ہے کہ
 ہر وقت و ہر وقت حضرت مولانا ابوالفتح
 مکتور طاعتت ایرین اور مولانا شرف اللہ شرف
 اور مولانا ایچ بیوز سوربہ کلام و کلمہ کسوف
 ایملدیتہ و نہ لکند

مولانا
 ایچ بیوز

Document 4. 1\10866, 20.7×14.1 cm, black ink, *divani* (1689)

Document 4

Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Generous Sultan, may you be healthy!

I am an Armenian from Tekfurdag. I came to rub my face [in the dust at your feet] [to plead] to be honored with the Holy Islam [in your presence] and to be gratified kindly with [new] clothes. The rest is left to the decree of my Sultan.

Your servant

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! On the part of the state, give the abovementioned exactly 1,000 *akçes* according to the law! This is my command!

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue Treasury bill!

[Note from the *ba muhasebe*]: Treasury bill was issued on May 3, 1689

[Inscription on *verso*]: [Given] personally to Mehmed *Çavu*

چکر لنگر نند
 و بی لنگر نند
 کا اہم ۱۱

روتلو وفد
 بطور لکھنؤ و سہی قصہ نند کلوب ہمدارین تریانی از سہی
 وین سہارہ کلکڑ ورا و ایلیم حضور سہارہ کلکڑ
 تانین وین سہارہ کلکڑ ورا و ایلیم حضور سہارہ کلکڑ
 برناتہ بارہ کیلہ جراف اولیو ہمدارین
 سہارہ کلکڑ

Document 5. CG 34\2, f. 4, 16.5x22 cm, black ink, *divani* (1704)

Document 5

Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Generous Sultan, may you be healthy!

Your humble slave comes from the district of Rustchuk. I reached the divine truth and wished to come and clarify my religion. I was taught the articles of faith and [embraced] the religion of Islam in your presence. I plead that you appoint me novice in the *sipahi* corps to make my living. The rest is left to the decree of my Sultan.

Your servant

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give [new] clothes to [this] one person according to the law! This is my command! November 10, 1704

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Correct!

Document 6

Your Majesty, my Prosperous and Merciful Sultan, may you be healthy!

Your humble slave is a Jew. From young age, I have been trained in the craft of metal purifying in the State mint. May praise be to God, and may He be extolled, I have now been illuminated by the true faith and I have reached the divine truth. After petitioning to be honored with Islam in the presence of Your Majesty, I would like to request from Your Merciful, Most High the following:

That I, your humble slave, be reckoned by my Good Illustrious Lord among his servants with an Exalted Order placing me in charge, for the duration of my lifetime, of the guild of metal purifiers at the State Mint. In return, I will be accountable to the state by depositing each year in the State Treasury the amount of 31,000 *akçes*. In order to spread the Muslim zeal among the accursed Jews, deign to allow your humble slave to attain his goal. In this respect, the rest is left to the favor and grace giving decree of Your Majesty, my Illustrious Sultan.

Your servant

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: To be given a luxury set of clothes, accordingly! This is my command! 06.12.1707

[Extract from the accounts of the *ba muhasebe*]: Expenses for luxury set of clothes for a new Muslim honored with the Holy Islam and given clothes based on [his] petition and the Imperial decree:

Premium grade broadcloth	Cotton pants	Premium grade broadcloth
Quantity	Quantity	Quantity
1	1	1
For embroidered robe:		For trousers:
4 [<i>ziraa</i>]		2 [<i>ziraa</i>]
Price of one <i>ziraa</i>		Price of one <i>ziraa</i>
3 [<i>guru</i>]		3 [<i>guru</i>]
<i>guru</i>	<i>guru</i>	<i>guru</i>
12	8	6

Expenses for tailor 1.5	Expenses for tailor 2	Expenses for tailor 1
[Total] 13.5	[Total] 10	[Total] 7
Vest Quantity 1 <i>guru</i> 3.5	Shirt 1 <i>guru</i> 5	Blue belt Quantity 1 <i>guru</i> 5
	Underpants Pair 1 <i>guru</i> 4	Turban Quantity 1 <i>guru</i> 1
		Slippers Pair 1 <i>guru</i> 1
Total <i>guru</i> paid: 50		

According to the Imperial decree, a luxury set of clothes was bought for one, new Muslim honored with the Holy Islam. To kindly order [the issue of] a Treasury bill, see the [above] records of the Central Accounting Department. In this regard, everything is left to the decree of His Majesty my Prosperous Sultan.

[Raport (*telhis*) of the *ba defterdar* to the Grand Vizier]:

The report of your servant is as follows:

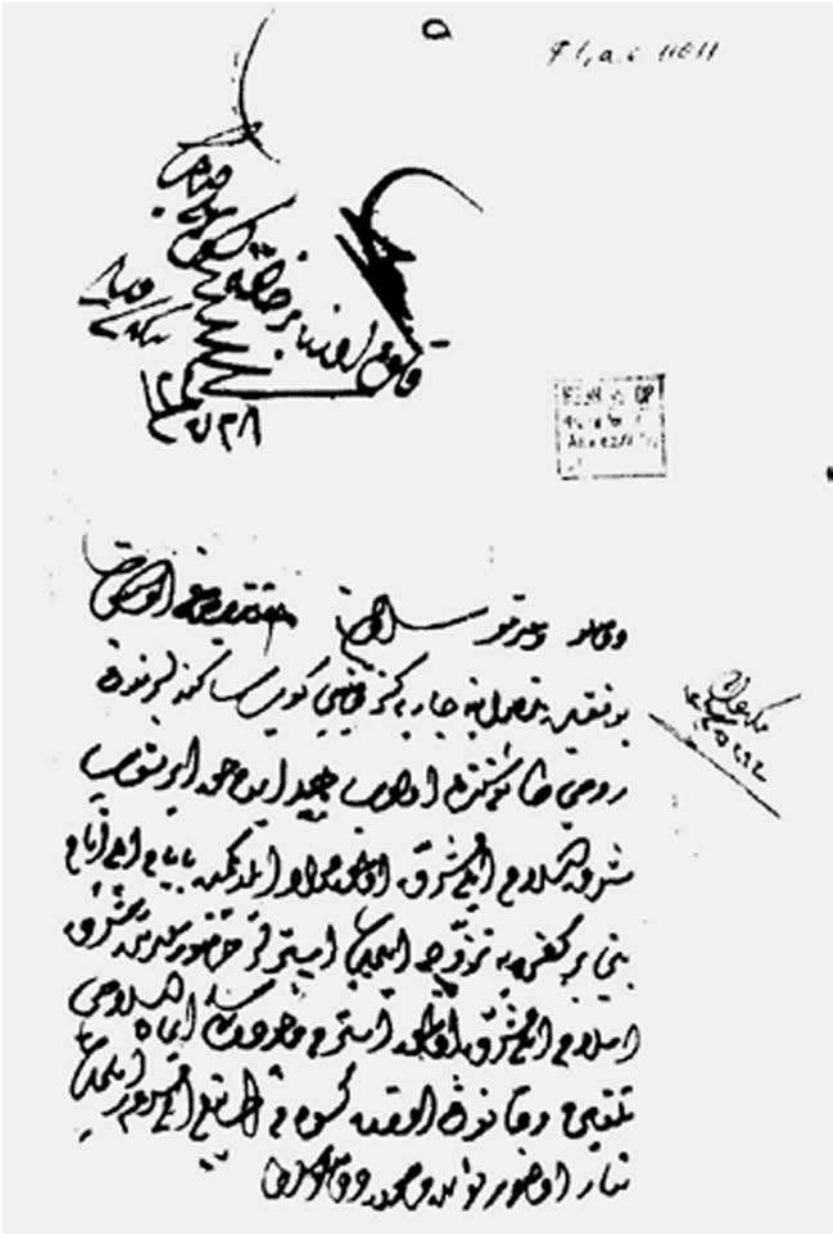
Exactly 50 *guru* were spent for the purchase, dressing and taking of fine measures for a luxury set of clothes for one person according to the Imperial decree for this humble subject, a new Muslim honored with the Holy Islam. When this becomes known to Your Excellency, it is necessary that you kindly order the issue of a Treasury bill from the Central Accounting Department. [However], even if a decree of Your Excellency is issued in this regard, [the final decision] is left to the decree of His Majesty, my Prosperous Sultan.

[Oval signature of the *ba defterdar*]

[Final endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! To be issued a Treasury bill according to the report! This is my command! [Date]: December 21, 1707

[Final endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Correct!

[Note from the *ba muhasebe*]: Treasury bill was issued on December 22, 1707.



Document 7. 1\11011, 22.4x14.4 cm, black ink, *divani* (1712)

Document 7

Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Prosperous Sultan, may you be healthy!

Your insignificant, humble servant is a Christian girl from among the inhabitants of Kadıköy, from the Greek people. I attained to the divine truth and wish to be honored with the Holy Islam [because] my parents want to marry me to an unbeliever. I want to be honored with the Holy Islam in Your Imperial presence. My request is the following:

I plead that, [since] I accepted the Islamic faith, I be kindly granted [the cash value] of my [new] clothes. The rest is left to the decree of my Illustrious Sultan.

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give [her] the cash value of [new] clothes for one woman! This is my command! [Date]: October 25, 1712

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue a Treasury bill.

[Note from the *ba muhasebe*]: Treasury bill was issued on October 23, 1712(?)

بادشاه ظل الله
 حضرت امیر کبیر
 شکر و سپاس
 کتب بهادری
 ۱۲۱۲
 ۱۳۲۸۲
 با این عنایتها عرضنامه مرصع بادشاه حضرت بیکر
 کسم بوق مرده فریب اما تار صفت
 پاره امله بوقولین مسور چراغ خواص ذمه سنه اجمال بیورق
 اولاد لری کبی بن غریب عثمان اندرب و جیحانه او جاعنن ناز
 اسلام ایله مشرق اولوب شاه زاده حضرت پدوس و ناسک
 عرضحال قوللری هنوز باطل دن جعوب حق دین قبول ابوب
 سینه مرصع بن بینه ادم اوز لرغ دور و ذایل ایلیه امیر یان
 وجودها بوندن خطار دن مصوفه و محفوظ ابوب
 حضرت امیر کبیر

Document 8. 1A\57265, 31x21.5 cm, black ink, *divani* (1720)

Document 8

Your Majesty, Noble, Magnificent Padishah, the shadow of God [on Earth], may God, Whose praises I recite and Who is to be extolled, guard and save your blessed Imperial body from errors and never put an end to the reign of your noble mercy over mankind. Amen.

The lucky petition of your humble slave [is the following]:

I have just left the false and accepted the true religion, and honored with Islam [in your presence]. [I plead that] you order, I, a poor-man's son, to be circumcised [together] with His Majesty the Royal prince and others of your pious children. In addition, [please] make me, your obedient slave, happy by admitting me among the group of Imperial servants and by [appointing me] to the corps of the arsenal, [thus] giving me a source of income. In this respect [everything] is in the hands of your Majesty, the All-powerful and Merciful, my Padishah.

I don't have anybody, [they are all] dead and my poor legs are disabled.

Your servant Hristo

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give [him] the cash value of [new] clothes for one person, according to the law! This is my command! [Date]: August 30, 1720

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue a Treasury bill!

[Note of the *ba muhasebe*]: Treasury bill was issued on September 2, 1720

Document 9

Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Merciful Lord, my Sultan, may you be healthy!

Your humble servant is one of the educated people. I was honored with the Holy Islam in the Highest Presence of My Lord. I plead to my Most High Merciful Lord that, since [the giving of] my [new] clothes and my circumcision are still to come and I don't have a place [designated for the latter] you order that a place for performance of my circumcision be designated. I also plead to be appointed among the group of [your] enlightened servants. The rest is left to the decree of the Illustrious and Gracious my Sultan.

Your servant, the new Muslim, a [former] priest

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give [him] accordingly the cash value of a luxury set of [new] clothes for one person! This is my command! September 22, 1721

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue a Treasury bill!

[Second endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: [Give] an estimate for one luxury set of clothes in the margin [of the document]!

[Excerpts from the accounts of the *ba muhasebe*]:

Cash value of
luxury set of clothes
[according] to purchase
order from 07/05/1721
guru
64

Cash value of
luxury set of clothes
[according] to purchase
order from 18/05/1720
guru
25

Cash value of
luxury set of clothes
[on] 10/11/1717
guru
16

[Final endorsement of the *ba defterdar* on top of excerpt 2]: Issue a Treasury bill according [to this excerpt].

[Note of the *ba muhasebe*]: A Treasury bill was issued on 07/10/1721.

[Inscription on *verso*]: [Given] personally to Hasan *Çavu*

Document 10

Your Majesty, my Illustrious, Prosperous and Merciful Lord, my Sultan, may you be healthy!

I, a poor [woman], have a seventeen-year-old son from my long ago deceased husband, the *zimmi* Karabet. The aforementioned deceased one bequeathed me, the poor one, and my son, the *zimmi* Hazaros, a freehold house in Istanbul, in the quarter of Karamet. However, since the aforementioned house was uninhabitable, I, the poor one, borrowed more than 200 *guru* from other people and completely renovated the house mentioned above. After that, because of my debt, I [sold] the title of the house to another *vakıf* for 100 *guru* in advance and then leased it [back] for 1.5 *akçes* a day. Then, when the *vakıf* gave [us] document of ownership and possession rights for the [now] *vakıf* house mentioned above, since there are two [legal] halves [of the house], we were [co]-owners with my son. Later on, my son, of his own free will, transferred to me, the poor one, the half in his possession and thus, the whole house of the aforementioned *vakıf* came in my possession. I was completely debt and lien free from my son.

However, my son's uncle, the Armenian Telbis Kambur, somehow incited my son. [The latter] has demanded the house from me and filed a suit. Although I did not have any debt [to my son], primarily as a result of my great fear of the aforementioned son of the poor one and [his uncle], and their evil [nature], I declared: "when I sell the house to somebody else and pay off my other debts I will give you 150 *guru* ." [Taking advantage] of my fear, they made me sign a sworn declaration [to that effect] and to register it at the court. Despite [the fact] that the house of the *vakıf* is still not sold and [fact that] I do not have any other debts, [my son], without appreciating the value of my house, wants to sell it entirely for [any] price. Moreover, he has said: "I will put you in prison," and somehow obtained a warrant [for that]. The latter is now in the hands of your obedient servant, the police officer, who in these blessed days took pity [on me] and did not put me in prison.

Because of my circumstances, Your Majesty, my Gracious Lord, I have come humbly to Your Illustrious Presence to rub my face in the dust [at your feet]. Now, [when] my son, although I do not have any debts, wants to put me in prison for failing to fulfill my

obligation [to him], in the name of Almighty God, take pity on my miserable situation. After the document of transfer [of the house], which I have, and the court decision obtained by the above mentioned [son of mine], are seen by your sharp Imperial gaze, it will become known to Your Majesty that I do not have any debts [in reality] but have taken on such of my own free will.

I plead that you order my deliverance from the hands of the aforementioned son of mine. Moreover, I, the poor one, realize that all that time I have been lost in infidelity. [However], now [that] the divine guidance has reached me, I want to be saved from the false religion and taught the articles of faith of the religion of Mohammed. I also want to be honored with Islam [in your presence] and gladly become your eager servant. I plead that you graciously issue an order to this effect.

Your Servant

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give [her] the cash value of [new] clothes! This is my command!

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue a Treasury bill!

[Note from the *ba muhasebe*]: A Treasury bill was issued on June 21, 1722

سید
ذبیح اوزده
مردم
۱۱۴۵

[Stamp]
سید
۱۱۴۵

و حق و اولاد
 بوده اند در حق بومین بقایا قوتی که او کونست و شوق و شایع ایستاد و این
 و این را سلام کمال و تکریم و شکر ایلیع حاله بیکسانش حد کونه او بسیر و اولاد
 از فتنه نیاز فتنه که فوجی را تاید و بود و در یکس کسوه از فتنه
 نیاز ایلیع مرمتا بود قوتی که و حق مسور و بویع بینه
 از فتنه و اولاد مسور سلطان و فتنه که
۱۱۴۵
۱۱۴۵

Document 11. NBKM, 1A\57290, 21.8×15.1 cm, black ink, *divani* (1722)

Document 11

Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Merciful Sultan may you be healthy!

The petition of your servant is as follows:

I was honored with the Holy Islam in the presence of the commander of the Imperial guards, may praise be to God, and I am [now] totally devoted to the religion of Islam. Currently I reside in the quarters of the Imperial guards. My request from my Illustrious Lord is that you kindly order that the cash value of [new] clothes given [to new Muslims] since early times be given to me, your humble servant, as well. The rest is left to the decree of Your Majesty, Illustrious and Prosperous my Sultan.

Your servant, the new Muslim Mustafa

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! If not already given, give [him] the cash value of [new] clothes for one person according to the law! This is my command! [Date]: December 11, 1722

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: The matter to be verified by the *ba muhasebe*!

[Note from *ba muhasebe*]: We have given many, many times [the cash value of new] clothes to new Muslims, [but only] when their names are known. A grant of [the cash value of new] clothes on the basis of the [above] petition is not registered by the *Ba muhasebe*. The [final] order is to His Majesty, my Sultan.

[Date]: December 12, 1722

[Second endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue a Treasury bill!

[Note from *ba muhasebe*]: A Treasury bill was issued on December 13, 1722

4

MSB 47
GUESS 7
APR 22 1931
7

حضرت مولانا محمد رفیع صاحب
مدرسہ اسلامیہ
بازار مولانا علی گانہ
کراچی

باذکارہم یا نساء العالمین

حضرت مولانا محمد رفیع صاحب

شوکتو و عظیمتو در پائینو
حضرت مولانا وجود علی بن حطاب بن حبیب سیر سلطنت بر کمال ائمه امین
العالمین بن شوکتو و عظیمتو با دنا هم حضرت مولانا بونزه اول دیوان کوفی
حضور همامین اسلام الله مشرفه اولدم للہ اللہ علی بن اسلام جہا فر
باسی و بار مسکن با سنی نیاز اولتند نامکان فالدم اسلام الله مشرفه
اولدم بر غمی کاخر اولرہنہ و ادم بکا قصد ابدلر موجود رک حضور
همامین اسلام الله مشرف اولنہ مر حمة صد فہ و بادشاهیہ
مسرد و بولن با بند نیاز اولر خرق شوکتو عظیمتو یا نساء العالمین ہ
حضرت مولانا محمد رفیع صاحب

محمد رفیع صاحب

صفا
نور
عاشق
حاضر

Document 12. NBKM, 1\11107, 34x20 cm, black ink, *nesih* and *divani* (1731)

Document 12

Your Greatest Majesty, my Glorious, Illustrious and Majestic Padishah [who is] Padishah of the Worlds, may God, whose lauds I recite and who be extolled, preserve your Imperial reign from errors! May you be the perfect spiritual leader on the Imperial throne, the trustee [on earth] of the Lord of the Worlds!

In the name of Your Majesty, my Glorious and Illustrious Padishah, on the previous meeting of the Imperial council I was honored with the Holy Islam in Your Imperial presence, may praise be to God, the Most High. My wish is [to receive] the cash-value of the trousseau, required by the religion of Islam or the cash-value of a house [because] since I was honored with Islam I don't have a place to stay [any-more]. Also, because I am disdainful of the unbelievers, they [now] plot evil things for me. My request is the following:

I respectfully plead that you order that I be gratified with the gracious charity of my Padishah given to women honored with Islam in your Imperial presence. The [final] decree is left to Your Majesty, the Glorious and Illustrious my Padishah of the Worlds.

Your servant, new Muslim, Aishe, the poor

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! By mercy of the situation of the above-mentioned [woman], give [her] exactly 40 *guru* as the cash value of [new] clothes! This is my command! [Date]: November 6, 1731

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue a Treasury bill!

[Note from the *ba muhasebe*]: Treasury bill was issued on November 9, 1731

Document 13

Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Merciful Sultan, may you be healthy!

Your humble servant is a Christian woman from the Greek [people]. I don't have a husband and for ten years, I worked very hard. [Finally] I said [to myself]: "Go to another place to find [your] fortune" and I took a loan of fifty *guru*. While I was trying to find a way to pay it off, [a voice] said clearly in my dream: "Accept Islam!" Three times it was clearly said in my dream: "Accept Islam and on the Imperial council the Ruler of the Kingdom will reward you for that!" [Thus], I attained the divine truth, renounced the false religion and turned to the true religion—the religion of Islam. [Then] I was honored with the true religion of Islam and taught the articles of faith of the religion of Islam. [Because] I am a woman, [please] order [that] I be gratified according to the tradition. In this regard, the decree is left to Your Majesty, my Illustrious and Merciful Sultan.

Your servant, the new Muslim

[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give [her the cash value of new] clothes according to the custom! This is my command!
October 28, 1731

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue a Treasury bill!

[Note from the *ba muhasebe*]: Treasury bill was issued on October 28, 1731

Document 14

Your Majesty, Illustrious, Virtuous, [the one] who looks after the people, my Merciful Lord, my Sultan, may you be healthy and may the rest [of your life] be prolonged!

I, your humble slave, am from the country of Venice and I was lost in [the darkness] of infidelity. [However], I unquestionably realized my error and experienced God in his Glory. By the wish and approval of God, the Most High, I severed all connections with my relatives and my country. Since I was illuminated entirely by the Holiness of Islam and the sun is shining now [for me], I turn toward God for spiritual guidance and from heart and mind I long for the religion of Mohammed. Because I am now devoted to God and I am turning away from error and unbelief, I am petitioning Your Imperial Body, bowing down, that you order that I be honored with Islam and taught the articles of faith in your presence and be appointed as [your] servant to make my living.

My plea to your Imperial Mercy is, in the name of God, don't deprive your obedient slave of your gratification, [since the latter] is God's wish. The rest is left to the decree of my Lord, my Sultan.

Your servant, the new Muslim

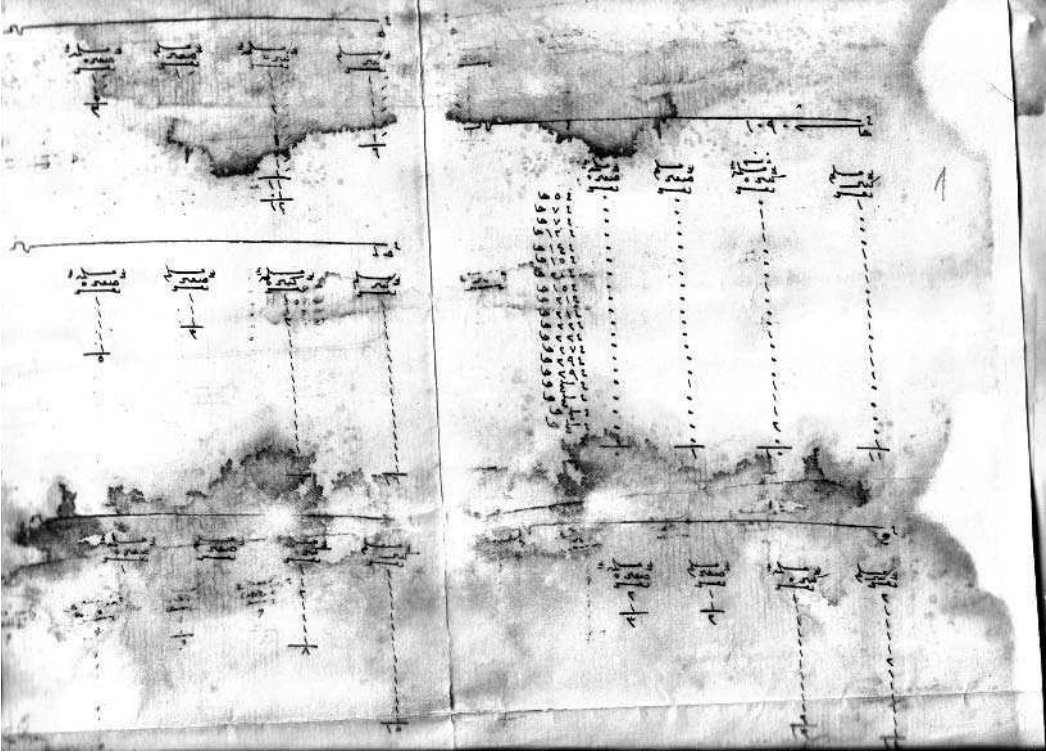
[Endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Correct! Give [him] the cash value of luxury set of [new] clothes since he is from the privileged people! This is my command! July 17, 1732

[Endorsement of the *ba defterdar*]: Issue a Treasury bill!

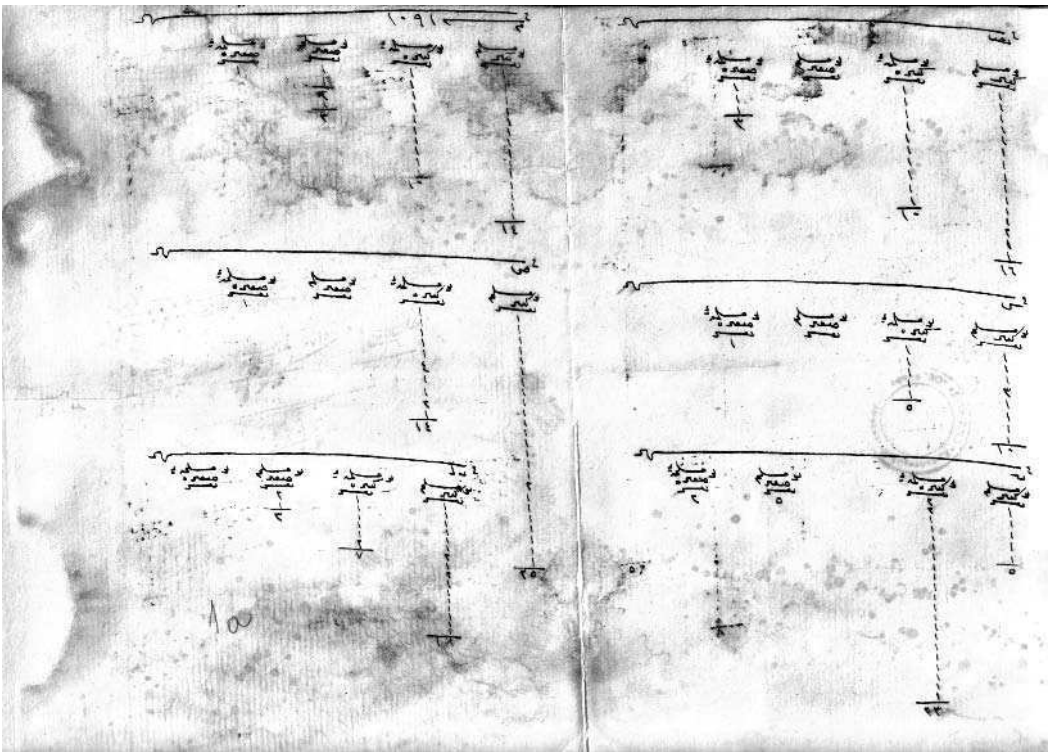
[Excerpt from the register of the *ba muhasebe*]: Cash value of a luxury set of [new] clothes for a new Muslim from the country of the Franks honored with the Holly Islam on October 7, 1731—100 *guru*

[Note from the *ba muhasebe*]: Treasury bill was issued [on] August 3, 1732.

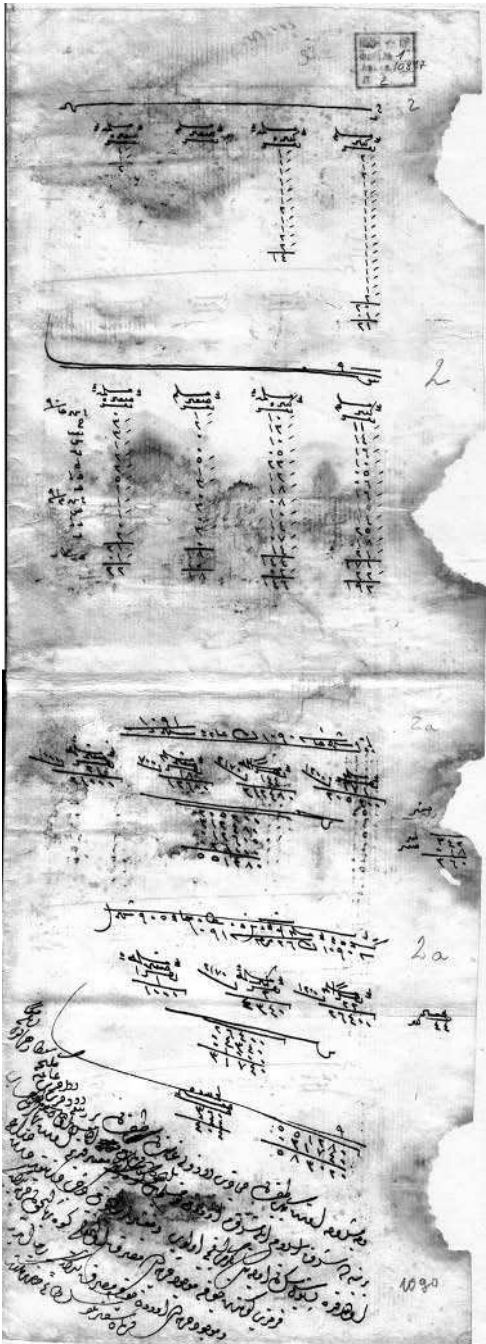
[Second endorsement of the Grand Vizier]: Commander of the bombardiers Ahmed Bey, find him a suitable position! This is my command!



Page 1b-2a (top)
 Document 15. OP\10817, 1-2, 47×33,5 cm, *siyakat* and *divani* (1680)



Page 1b-2a (bottom)
Document 15. OP\10817, 1-2, 47×33,5 cm, *siyakat* and *divani* (1680)



Document 15

(Page 1b)

*Hüve*In the month of *Cemaziülevvel*, year 1090 (June 10–July 9, 1679)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number	
1	—	—	—	on June 14
—	1	—	—	on June 16
—	1	—	—	on June 16
—	1	—	—	on June 21
1	—	—	—	on June 23
1	—	—	—	on June 24
1	—	—	—	on July 1
—	1	—	—	on June 24
1	—	—	—	on June 30
1	—	—	—	on June 30
1	—	—	—	on July 1
—	1	—	—	on July 1
1	—	—	—	on July 6
1	—	—	—	on July 8
1	—	1	—	on July 8
—	1	—	—	on July 9
—	1	—	—	on July 9
—	1	—	—	on July 9
—	2	—	—	on July 9
1	—	—	—	
11	10	1	0	

In the month of *Cemaziülahır* (July 10–August 7, 1679)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
2	1	1	2
1	1	1	1
1	1		
1	1	2	3
1	1		
2	1		

Table (cont.)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	2		
<hr/>			
14	13		

In the month of *Receb* (August 8–September 6, 1679)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
1	1		1
1	1		1
1	1		1
1	1		<hr/>
1	1		3
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	<hr/>		
1	10		
2			
1			
1			
<hr/>			
16			

In the month of *aban* (September 7–October 5, 1679)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
1	1		1
1	1		

(Page 2a)

In the month of *evval* (October 5–December 3, 1679)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
1	1	1	1
1	1		1
1	1		—
1	2		—
1	1		2
1	1		
—	1		
6	1		
	1		
	1		
	1		
	—		
	11		
	1		
	—		
	12		

In the month of *zilkade* (December 4–January 2, 1680)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1
1	3	1	1
1	1	—	1
1	1	3	1
1	1		—
1	1		5
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
—	—		
16	18		

In the month of *Zilhice* (January 3–February 1, 1680)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>		
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>1</i>	<hr/>		
<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>		
<i>1</i>			
<i>1</i>			
<i>1</i>			
<i>1</i>			
<i>1</i>			
<i>1</i>			
<hr/>			
<i>15</i>			

In the month of *Muharrem*, year *1091* (February 2–March 2, 1680)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<hr/>	
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<hr/>	
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		
<i>1</i>	<hr/>		
<i>1</i>	<i>10</i>		
<i>1</i>			
<i>1</i>			
<hr/>			
<i>14</i>			

In the month of *Safer* (March 3–March 31, 1680)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
1	1		1
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	4		
1	1		
1	1		
1	2		
1	1		
1	<hr/>		
1	14		
1			
1			
1			
1			
2			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
<hr/>			
25			

In the month of *Rebiülevvel* (April 1–April 30, 1680)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
1	1	2	
1	1	1	
1	1	<hr/>	
1	1	3	
1	1		
1	2		
2	<hr/>		
	8		

Table (cont.)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
1			
2			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
1			
<hr/>			
18			

(Page 2b)

In the month of *Rebiülâhur* (May 1–May 29, 1680)

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number
2	1		1
1	1		1
2	1		<hr/>
1	1		2
1	1		
1	1		
1	2		
1	1		
1	1		
1	2		
1	2		
1	<hr/>		
1	14		
1			
1			
1			
2			
<hr/>			
20			
1			
<hr/>			
21			

Total count

New Muslims men number	New Muslims women number	New Muslims boys number	New Muslims girls number	
11	10	1	–	In the month of <i>Cemaziülevvel</i> , year 1090
14	13	2	3	In the month of <i>Cemaziülahur</i>
16	10	–	3	In the month of <i>Receb</i>
10	5	–	1	In the month of <i>aban</i>
5	23	5	2	In the month of <i>Ramazan</i>
6	12	1	2	In the month of <i>evval</i>
16	18	3	5	In the month of <i>Zilkade</i>
15	8	–	1	In the month of <i>Zilhice</i>
14	10	3	1	In the month of <i>Muharrem</i> , year 1091
25	14	–	1	In the month of <i>Safer</i>
18	7	3	–	In the month of <i>Rebiülevvel</i>
21	14	–	2	In the month of <i>Rebiülahur</i>
<hr/> 171	<hr/> 144	<hr/> 18	<hr/> 21	
22	2	–	1	During the [Royal] hunt
<hr/> 193	<hr/> 146	<hr/> 18	<hr/> 22	

Since the beginning of the month of *Cemaziülevvel*, year 1090 to the end of the month of *Rebiülahur*, year 1091

New Muslim [men] number	New Muslim [women] number	New Muslim [boys] number	New Muslim [girls] number
<i>171</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>21</i>
each [given] <i>1,200</i>	each [given] <i>2,170</i>	each [given] <i>700</i>	each [given] <i>1,000</i>
<i>akçe</i>	<i>akçe</i>	<i>akçe</i>	<i>akçe</i>
[total] <i>akçe</i>	[total] <i>akçe</i>	[total] <i>akçe</i>	[total] <i>akçe</i>
<i>205,200</i>	<i>312,480</i>	<i>12,600</i>	<i>21,000</i>
Accounted		Trousers	
<i>205,200</i>		[for] men	<i>342</i>
<i>312,480</i>		[for] boys	<i>18</i>
<i>12,600</i>			<hr/>
<i>2,100</i>			<i>360</i>
<hr/>			
<i>551,280 akçe</i>			

[Spend] for new Muslims' clothes during the Royal hunt from September 13, 1679 until February 27, 1680

New Muslim [men] number	New Muslim [women] number	New Muslim [girls] number	Trousers Pairs
<i>22</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	
each [given] <i>1,200</i>	each [given] <i>2,170</i>	each [given] <i>1,000</i>	[for] men
<i>akçe</i>	<i>akçe</i>	<i>akçe</i>	<i>44</i>
[total] <i>akçe</i>	[total] <i>akçe</i>	[total] <i>akçe</i>	
<i>26,400</i>	<i>4,340</i>	<i>1,000</i>	
Total <i>akçe</i>			
<i>26,400</i>			
<i>4,340</i>			
<i>1,000</i>			
<hr/>			
<i>31,740</i>			
Grand Total			
<i>Akçe</i>	London [cloth] trousers		
	Pairs		
<i>551,280</i>	<i>360</i>		
<i>31,740</i>	<i>44</i>		
<hr/>	<hr/>		
<i>583,020</i>	<i>404</i>		

As pointed out above, in the period between June 1, 1679 and May 29, 1680, including [the duration of] the Royal hunt, the value of clothes [that were given] according to the old custom to new Muslims, honoured with the Holly Islam, was calculated to be 583,020 *akçe*.

In addition, 404 cubits of the available red broadcloth in the warehouse was used for trousers.

It is requested that a Treasury bill for the cash value of [new Muslim] clothes and an expense order for the broadcloth be issued.

[The final] decision is in the hands of His Majesty, my Sultan.

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF ARCHIVAL UNITS IN THE NATIONAL
LIBRARY OF BULGARIA CONTAINING
KISVE BAHASI PETITIONS

	Year (A.D.) 1	Year (A.H.) 2	Call Number 3	Date 4	Documents 5
1.	1681	1092	1\3565	18 <i>aban</i>	1
2.	1677	1088	1\10786	13 <i>eval</i>	1
3.	1677	1088	1\10787	13 <i>eval</i>	2
4.	1679	1090	1\10812	28 <i>Cemaziülahr</i>	1
5.	1679–80	1090	1\10817, 4–25	26 <i>Muharrem–</i> 9 <i>eval</i>	21
6.	1680	1091	1\10818	24 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
7.	1680	1091	1\10820	29 <i>Rebiülahr</i>	1
8.	1680	1091	1\10824	24 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
9.	1681	1092	1\10829	1 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
10.	1681	1092	1\10833	30 <i>Cemaziülahr</i>	1
11.	1681	1092	1\10835	21 <i>Receb</i>	1
12.	1681	1092	1\10836	4 <i>aban</i>	1
13.	1685	1096	1\10838	10 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
14.	1682	1093	1\10843	25 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
15.	1682	1093	1\10844	21 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
16.	1682	1093	1\10846	10 <i>Rebiülahr</i>	1
17.	1682	1093	1\10847	9 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
18.	1683	1094	1\10849	2 <i>aban</i>	2
19.	1686	1098	1\10858	30 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
20.	1689	1100	1\10866	13 <i>Receb</i>	1
21.	1689	1100	1\10867	14 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
22.	1689	1101	1\10868	28 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
23.	1699	1110	1\10921	12 <i>aban</i>	1
24.	1700	1112	1\10923	18 <i>Safer</i>	1
25.	1701	1112	1\10926	19 <i>Ramazan</i>	2
26.	1701	1112	1\10937	19 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
27.	1705	1116	1\10976	19 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
28.	1706	1117	1\10977	6 <i>Zilkade</i>	2
29.	1706	1117	1\10978	12 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
30.	1706	1118	1\10981, 2–8	3–24 <i>Rebiülahr</i>	7
31.	1707	1119	1\10983, 1–4	2–11 <i>Ramazan</i>	4
32.	1708	1119	1\10984	<i>eval</i>	3
33.	1708	1120	1\10987	9 <i>Cemaziülahr</i>	1

Table (cont.)

	Year (A.D.)	Year (A.H.)	Call Number	Date	Documents
	1	2	3	4	5
34.	1710	1121	1\10988	11 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
35.	1710	1122	1\10990	14 <i>Cemaziülahr</i>	2
36.	1711	1123	1\10992	5 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
37.	1711	1123	1\10993	7 <i>eval</i>	1
38.	1711	1123	1\10994	7 <i>eval</i>	1
39.	1711	1123	1\10995	11 <i>eval</i>	1
40.	1712	1124	1\10997	1 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
41.	1712	1124	1\10998	3 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
42.	1712	1124	1\10999	10 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
43.	1712	1124	1\11000, 1-4	1-10 <i>Muharrem</i>	4
44.	1712	1124	1\11001	6 <i>Safer</i>	1
45.	1712	1124	1\11002	13 <i>Safer</i>	1
46.	1712	1124	1\11003	29 <i>Rebiülahr</i>	1
47.	1712	1124	1\11005	1 <i>Cemaziülevel</i>	1
48.	1712	1124	1\11006	6 <i>Cemaziülevel</i>	1
49.	1712	1124	1\11007	18 <i>aban</i>	1
50.	1712	1124	1\11008	22 <i>aban</i>	1
51.	1712	1124	1\11009	29 <i>aban</i>	1
52.	1712	1124	1\11011	26 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
53.	1712	1124	1\11012	26 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
54.	1712	1124	1\11013	21 <i>eval</i>	1
55.	1713	1125	1\11014	13 <i>Receb</i>	1
56.	1714	1126	1\11015	10 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
57.	1714	1126	1\11019	11 <i>Safer</i>	1
58.	1717	1129	1\11020	23 <i>Rebiülevel</i>	1
59.	1717	1129	1\11021	1 <i>Cemaziülevel</i>	1
60.	1717	1129	1\11024	12 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
61.	1718	1131	1\11030	20 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
62.	1719	1131	1\11031	30 <i>Cemaziülevel</i>	1
63.	1719	1132	1\11033	13 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
64.	1720	1132	1\11036	12 <i>Cemaziülahr</i>	1
65.	1720	1133	1\11038	10 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
66.	1720	1133	1\11039	11 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
67.	1721	1133	1\11041	9 <i>Cemaziülevel</i>	1
68.	1721	1133	1\11043	25 <i>Receb</i>	1
69.	1721	1133	1\11044	18 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
70.	1722	1134	1\11045		1
71.	1722	1134	1\11047	2 <i>Rebiülahr</i>	1
72.	1722	1134	1\11048	16 <i>Rebiülevel</i>	1
73.	1722	1134	1\11049	19 <i>Rebiülevel</i>	1
74.	1722	1134	1\11050	21 <i>Rebiülevel</i>	1
75.	1722	1134	1\11051	13 <i>Rebiülahr</i>	1
76.	1722	1134	1\11052	11 <i>Receb</i>	1
77.	1722	1135	1\11053	4 <i>Rebiülevel</i>	1

Table (cont.)

	Year (A.D.)	Year (A.H.)	Call Number	Date	Documents
	1	2	3	4	5
78.	1723	1135	1\11054	19 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
79.	1723	1135	1\11056	20 <i>Receb</i>	1
80.	1723	1135	1\11057	23 <i>aban</i>	2
81.	1723	1136	1\11058, 1-2	6 <i>Muharrem-</i> 1 <i>Safer</i>	2
82.	1724	1136	1\11060	9 <i>evval</i>	1
83.	1724	1136	1\11061	18 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
84.	1725	1137	1\11062	12 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	2
85.	1725	1137	1\11063	9 <i>Cemaziülahur</i>	1
86.	1725	1137	1\11064	23 <i>Cemaziülahur</i>	1
87.	1725	1137	1\11066	12 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
88.	1725	1137	1\11067	19 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
89.	1725	1138	1\11072	5 <i>Rebiülahur</i>	1
90.	1726	1138	1\11073	30 <i>Receb</i>	1
91.	1726	1138	1\11074	3 <i>aban</i>	1
92.	1726	1138	1\11075	26 <i>aban</i>	1
93.	1726	1139	1\11076	28 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
94.	1727	1139	1\11077	8 <i>Cemaziülahur</i>	1
95.	1727	1139	1\11078	<i>Cemaziülahur</i>	1
96.	1727	1139	1\11079	28 <i>Cemaziülahur</i>	1
97.	1727	1139	1\11080	28 <i>Cemaziülahur</i>	2
98.	1727	1140	1\11082	19 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
99.	1728	1140	1\11087	9 <i>Receb</i>	1
100.	1728	1140	1\11089	21 <i>evval</i>	1
101.	1729	1142	1\11092	19 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
102.	1730	1143	1\11095	12 <i>Safer</i>	1
103.	1730	1143	1\11097	26 <i>Safer</i>	1
104.	1731	1144	1\11106	26 <i>Rebiülahur</i>	1
105.	1731	1144	1\11107	6 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
106.	1731	1144	1\11108	9 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
107.	1731	1144	1\11109	16 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
108.	1732	1145	1\11111	11 <i>Safer</i>	1
109.	1733	1145	1\11116	30 <i>aban</i>	1
110.	1733	1145	1\11117	25 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
111.	1733	1145	1\11118	24 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
112.	1733	1145	1\11119	27 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
113.	1734	1146	1\11125	18 <i>aban</i>	1
114.	1734	1146	1\11126	3 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
115.	1679	1090	1\20856	26 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	7
116.	1681	1092	1\20865	2 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
117.	1682	1093	1\20866	4 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
118.	1682	1094	1\20868	1 <i>Muharrem</i>	2
119.	1678	1089	1A\6783	17 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
120.	1681	1092	1A\6786	3 <i>Rebiülahur</i>	1

Table (cont.)

	Year (A.D.)	Year (A.H.)	Call Number	Date	Documents
	1	2	3	4	5
121.	1724	1136	1A\6802	22 <i>aban</i>	1
122.	1714	1126	1A\6804	3 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
123.	1720	1132	1A\6805	6 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
124.	1721	1133	1A\6808	20 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
125.	1722	1134	1A\6809	21 <i>aban</i>	1
126.	1725	1137	1A\6810	28 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
127.	1726	1139	1A\6813	22 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
128.	1727	1139	1A\6814	12 <i>Receb</i>	1
129.	1727	1139	1A\6815	7 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
130.	1731	1144	1A\6818	14 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
131.	1678	1088	1A\56521	7 <i>Zilkade</i>	3
132.	1728	1139	1A\56528	8 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
133.	1677	1088	1A\57008	25 <i>Rebiülâhur</i>	1
134.	1679	1090	1A\57029	25 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
135.	1679	1090	1A\57031	29 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
136.	1679	1090	1A\57035	17 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	2
137.	1679	1090	1A\57036	26 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
138.	1679	1090	1A\57037	6 <i>Receb</i>	1
139.	1680	1090	1A\57039	15 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
140.	1679	1090	1A\57040	22 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
141.	1680	1091	1A\57042	21 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
142.	1680	1091	1A\57045	4 <i>Rebiülâhur</i>	1
143.	1680	1091	1A\57048	30 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
144.	1680	1091	1A\57050	7 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
145.	1681	1092	1A\57056	<i>Safer</i>	3
146.	1681	1092	1A\57058	15 <i>Rebiülâhur</i>	1
147.	1681	1092	1A\57060	<i>Rebiülâhur</i>	5
148.	1681	1092	1A\57061	20 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
149.	1681	1092	1A\57062	22 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
150.	1681	1092	1A\57064	1 <i>aban</i>	1
151.	1681	1092	1A\57066	11 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
152.	1682	1093	1A\57071	29 <i>Safer</i>	1
153.	1682	1093	1A\57072	2 <i>Rebiülâhur</i>	1
154.	1682	1093	1A\57076	25 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
155.	1682	1093	1A\57080	8 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
156.	1683	1094	1A\57083	7 <i>aban</i>	1
157.	1683	1094	1A\57084	29 <i>aban</i>	1
158.	1685	1096	1A\57090	9 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
159.	1684	1095	1A\57088	22 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
160.	1685	1096	1A\57091	23 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
161.	1685	1096	1A\57092	27 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	12
162.	1685	1096	1A\57093	16 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	3
163.	1685	1096	1A\57094	4 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	1
164.	1685	1096	1A\57095	24–26 <i>Cemaziülâhur</i>	2

Table (cont.)

Year (A.D.) 1	Year (A.H.) 2	Call Number 3	Date 4	Documents 5
165.	1686	1A\57097	24 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
166.	1686	1A\57101	30 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
167.	1687	1A\57105	12 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
168.	1689	1A\57107	12 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	11
169.	1689	1A\57108	15 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
170.	1689	1A\57112	15 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	4
171.	1689	1A\57114	9 <i>Safer</i>	1
172.	1690	1A\57115	5 <i>Cemaziülahur</i>	1
173.	1701	1A\57164	11 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
174.	1701	1A\57167	7 <i>Receb</i>	1
175.	1728	1A\57168	14 <i>Safer</i>	1
176.	1703	1A\57173	22 <i>Receb</i>	10
177.	1704	1A\57175	5 <i>aban</i>	1
178.	1705	1A\57178	26 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
179.	1706	1A\57184	<i>Muharrem</i>	3
180.	1707	1A\57183	29 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	5
181.	1710	1A\57189	15 <i>Zilkade</i>	6
182.	1711	1A\57191	11 <i>Zilkade</i>	3
183.	1711	1A\57194	23 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
184.	1711	1A\57193	5 <i>aban</i>	1
185.	1711	1A\57195	4 <i>eval</i>	1
186.	1711	1A\57196	29 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
187.	1711	1A\57198	6 <i>eval</i>	1
188.	1712	1A\57201	6 <i>Safer</i>	1
189.	1712	1A\57202	13 <i>Safer</i>	1
190.	1712	1A\57204	24 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
191.	1712	1A\57206	21 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
192.	1712	1A\57207	24 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
193.	1712	1A\57209	20 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
194.	1712	1A\57211	20 <i>eval</i>	2
195.	1712	1A\57212	5 <i>eval</i>	1
196.	1713	1A\57214	5 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	3
197.	1713	1A\57218	24 <i>aban</i>	1
198.	1713	1A\57221	3 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
199.	1715	1A\57224	1 <i>aban</i>	1
200.	1716	1A\57226	16 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
201.	1716	1A\57227	28 <i>Safer</i>	1
202.	1717	1A\57229	11 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
203.	1717	1A\57233	9 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
204.	1717	1A\57235	6 <i>Receb</i>	1
205.	1717	1A\57237	18 <i>aban</i>	1
206.	1717	1A\57238	5 <i>Cemaziülahur</i>	1
207.	1718	1A\57241	1 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1
208.	1718	1A\57243	25 <i>Zilhicce</i>	1

Table (cont.)

Year (A.D.)	Year (A.H.)	Call Number	Date	Documents	
1	2	3	4	5	
209.	1718	1131	1A\57244	6 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
210.	1719	1131	1A\57252	15 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
211.	1720	1133	1A\57254	18 <i>Safer</i>	1
212.	1720	1132	1A\57255	25 <i>Safer</i>	1
213.	1720	1132	1A\57256	22 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
214.	1720	1132	1A\57259	27 <i>Receb</i>	1
215.	1720	1132	1A\57262	23 <i>aban</i>	2
216.	1720	1132	1A\57263	29 <i>aban</i>	1
217.	1720	1132	1A\57265	28 <i>eval</i>	1
218.	1720	1133	1A\57267	16 <i>Muharrem</i>	2
219.	1721	1133	1A\57275	22 <i>eval</i>	2
220.	1721	1134	1A\57279	12 <i>Safer</i>	2
221.	1722	1134	1A\57283	26 <i>Receb</i>	2
222.	1722	1134	1A\57284	3 <i>aban</i>	1
223.	1722	1135	1A\57288	26 <i>Safer</i>	1
224.	1722	1135	1A\57289	<i>Safer</i>	1
225.	1722	1135	1A\57290	4 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
226.	1723	1135	1A\57291	3 <i>Receb</i>	1
227.	1723	1135	1A\57293	13 <i>Receb</i>	1
228.	1723	1135	1A\57294	2 <i>aban</i>	1
229.	1723	1135	1A\57296	<i>Zilkade</i>	2
230.	1724	1136	1A\57297	6 <i>eval</i>	1
231.	1723	1136	1A\57298	19 <i>Safer</i>	2
232.	1725	1137	1A\57300	13 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
233.	1725	1137	1A\57302	19 <i>Ramazan</i>	2
234.	1725	1137	1A\57303	29 <i>eval</i>	1
235.	1725	1137	1A\57304	23 <i>Zilkade</i>	1
236.	1726	1138	1A\57314	13 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
237.	1726	1138	1A\57315	27 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
238.	1726	1138	1A\57316	9 <i>eval</i>	1
239.	1726	1138	1A\57317	10 <i>eval</i>	1
240.	1726	1138	1A\57318	2 <i>eval</i>	1
241.	1091-1144	1681-1732	1A\57319, 1-53	26 <i>Safer-</i> 16 <i>Receb</i>	20
242.	1726	1138	1A\57320	22 <i>eval</i>	1
243.	1727	1139	1A\57322	26 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
244.	1727	1139	1A\57323	3 <i>Cemaziülahur</i>	1
245.	1727	1139	1A\57324	8 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
246.	1727	1139	1A\57326	10 <i>eval</i>	1
247.	1727	1139	1A\57327	24 <i>eval</i>	1
248.	1727	1140	1A\57329	30 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
249.	1718	1130	1A\57332	27 <i>Rebiülahur</i>	1
250.	1728	1140	1A\57335	3 <i>Receb</i>	1
251.	1729	1141	1A\57339	13 <i>Receb</i>	1

Table (cont.)

Year (A.D.) 1	Year (A.H.) 2	Call Number 3	Date 4	Documents 5
252. 1729	1141	1A\57340	2 <i>aban</i>	1
253. 1729	1141	1A\57341	7 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
254. 1729	1142	1A\57344	8 <i>Cemaziülahr</i>	1
255. 1730	1143	1A\57347	7 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
256. 1730	1143	1A\57348	19 <i>Safer</i>	1
257. 1731	1143	1A\57349	<i>Receb</i>	2
258. 1731	1143	1A\57351	9 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
259. 1732	1144	1A\57361	7 <i>Receb</i>	2
260. 1732	1144	1A\57368	4 <i>Receb</i>	1
261. 1732	1145	1A\57370	20 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
262. 1682	1093	1A\66334	23 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
263. 1712	1124	1A\66336	17 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
264. 1712	1124	112\6468	16 <i>Muharrem</i>	1
265. 1720	1132	119\1808	13 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1
266. 1686	1097	145\108	9 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
267. 1704	1116	CG 34\2, 2-12	3 <i>Cemaziülevvel-</i> 18 <i>aban</i>	12
268. 1687	1099	CG 80\13	<i>Rebiülevvel</i>	35
269. 1703	1114	NPTAXVIII 8\40	26 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
270. 1708	1120	NPTAXVIII 8\94		1
271. 1672-1734	1081-1147	NPTA XX 1\28	21 <i>Zilkade-</i> 11 <i>evval</i>	28
272. 1719	1131	OAK 13\57	26 <i>aban</i>	1
273. 1725	1137	OAK 17\18	12 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
274. 1725	1137	OAK 17\80	12 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
275. 1712	1124	OAK 34\35	26 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
276. 1719	1131	OAK 34\68	26 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	1
277. 1682	1093	OAK 35\30	26 <i>Ramazan</i>	1
278. 1722	1134	OAK 37\105	18 <i>aban</i>	1
279. 1732	1145	OAK 43\32	19 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	2
280. 1719	1131	OAK 43\45	29 <i>Safer</i>	1
281. 1708	1119	OAK 52\45	7 <i>evval</i>	4
282. 1686	1097	OAK 53\23	23 <i>aban</i>	3
283. 1690	1101	OAK 53\24	29 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	7
284. 1686	1097	OAK 53\25	12 <i>aban</i>	25
285. 1717	1129	OAK 67\17	28 <i>Cemaziülahr</i>	1
286. 1686	1097	OAK 76\52, 2-74	5 <i>Rebiülevvel-</i> 9 <i>Cemaziülevvel</i>	13
287. 1722	1134	OAK 78\56	11 <i>Receb</i>	1
288. 1707	1119	OAK 78\83, 6,9	23 <i>Ramazan-</i> 19 <i>aban</i>	2
289. 1680	1091	OAK 99\27	28 <i>Rebiülevvel</i>	1

Table (cont.)

	Year (A.D.) 1	Year (A.H.) 2	Call Number 3	Date 4	Documents 5
290.	1722	1134	OAK 100\14	25 <i>aban</i>	1
291.	1710	1122	OAK 105\8	24 <i>Cemaziülevel</i>	5
292.	1683	1094	OAK 111\32	5 <i>aban</i>	15
293.	1728	1140	OAK 117\34	25 <i>Cemaziülahr</i>	2
294.	1710	1121	OAK 161\17		10
295.	1706	1117	OAK 162\39	19 <i>Şilkade</i>	4
296.	1732	1144	OAK 168\21		1
297.	1732	1144	OAK 170\31	17 <i>Rebüülahr</i>	1
298.	1732	1144	OAK 170\34		1
299.	1710	1122	SL 6\18, 1-11	14-21 <i>Cemaziülevel</i>	11
Total					601

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF ARCHIVAL UNITS IN THE *BA BAKANLIK*
 OTTOMAN ARCHIVE, ISTANBUL, CONTAINING
KISVE BAHASI PETITIONS

	Year A.D.	Year A.H.	Archival unit	Documents
1	1675	1086	Ali Emiri, Mehmed IV, 504	1
2	1675	1086	A.E. Mehmed IV, 608	1
3	1675	1086	A.E. Mehmed IV, 609	1
4	1675	1086	A.E. Mehmed IV, 626	1
5	1675	1086	A.E. Mehmed IV, 728	1
6	1684	1095	A.E. Mehmed IV, 888	13
7	1673	1084	A.E. Mehmed IV, 1642	8
8	1674	1085	A.E. Mehmed IV, 1710	4
9	1681	1092	A.E. Mehmed IV, 4754	1
10	1674	1085	A.E. Mehmed IV, 4798	1
11	1686	1097	<i>Bab-i Defter Ba muhasebe</i> , 507	1
Total				33

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NBKM, Or. O., Collection IA, a. u. 6783, 6786, 6802, 6804, 6805, 6808, 6809, 6810, 6813, 6814, 6815, 6818, 56521, 56528, 57008, 57029, 57031, 57035, 57036, 57037, 57039, 57040, 57042, 57045, 57048, 57050, 57056, 57058, 57060, 57061, 57062, 57064, 57066, 57071, 57072, 57076, 57080, 57083, 57084, 57090, 57088, 57091, 57092, 57093, 57094, 57095, 57097, 57101, 57105, 57107, 57108, 57112, 57114, 57115, 57164, 57167, 57168, 57173, 57175, 57178, 57184, 57183, 57189, 57191, 57194, 57193, 57195, 57196, 57198, 57201, 57202, 57204, 57206, 57207, 57209, 57211, 57212, 57214, 57218, 57221, 57224, 57226, 57227, 57229, 57233, 57235, 57237, 57238, 57241, 57243, 57244, 57252, 57254, 57255, 57256, 57259, 57262, 57263, 57265, 57267, 57275, 57279, 57283, 57284, 57288, 57289, 57290, 57291, 57293, 57294, 57296, 57297, 57298, 57300, 57302, 57303, 57304, 57314, 57315, 57316, 57317, 57318, 57319:1–53, 57320, 57322, 57323, 57324, 57326, 57327, 57329, 57332, 57335, 57339, 57340, 57341, 57344, 57347, 57348, 57349, 57351, 57361, 57368, 57370, 66334, 66336.

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NBKM, Or. O., Collection 119, a. u. 1808.

NBKM, Or. O., Collection 145, a. u. 108.

NBKM, Or. O., Collection CG, a. u. 34\2:2–12, 80\13.

NBKM, Or. O., Collection NPTA XVIII, a. u. 1\28, 8\40, 8\94.

NBKM, Or. O., Collection OAK, a. u. 13\57, 17\18, 17\80, 34\35, 34\68, 35\30, 37\105, 43\32, 43\45, 52\45, 53\23, 53\24, 53\25, 67\17, 76\52:2–74, 78\56, 78\83:6,9, 99\27, 100\14, 105\8, 111\32, 117\34, 161\17, 162\39, 168\21, 170\31, 170\34.

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